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SHORT SERMONS ON THE PSALMS

Volume II.

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By the same Author

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SHORT SERMONS ON THE PSALMS

IN THEIR ORDER

PREACHED IN A VILLAGE CHURCH

Vol. I. Psalms I.—XXV.

SHORT
SERMONS ON THE PSALMS

IN THEIR ORDER

PREACHED IN A VILLAGE CHURCH

BY

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PSALMS XXVI.



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PREFACE

MY sincere thanks are due to many unknown friends for their kind remarks upon and notice of the first volume of this small and unpretending work. Many of these I have seen; others I have heard of, but not seen. They have led me to take one step more in advance, and to continue my work to the end of the 51st Psalm.

In doing this, I lay no claim either to eloquence or learning. The sermons were written solely for an ordinary congregation in a rural Parish Church, in the hope of giving them some better understanding and appreciation of that portion of Holy Scripture which is more in use than any other, with its special reference to Christ and to ourselves, as members of Christ's church.

I am conscious that there is here both sameness and repetition, and perhaps to a greater extent than I am aware of myself. But besides a man's own individuality, which will betray itself, I would remark how much sameness and repetition there is in the Psalms themselves, and in many parts of Holy Scripture.

Was it not our Lord's own special way of teaching by *repetition* of the same truths in the very same, or nearly the same, words; more necessary as it may have been in those days, when neither shorthand writers were present to take down His teaching, as it fell from those lips which spake as never man spake, nor printing-presses existed to preserve it? But we are told "the common people heard Him gladly."

Was S. Paul alive to the fact that, in the short Epistles which bear his name, one text occurs *three* times over—"The just shall live by faith" *—and others twice?

I have never forgotten the remark of one, whose memory many besides myself hold in reverence—the late Canon Pinder, of Wells—made to me more than thirty years ago, that in these days of neglect no sermon ought to be without some reference, more or less direct, to one or both of Christ's Holy Sacraments.

I can only hope that this volume may in some way fulfil the object I have at heart, by promoting love and reverence for the Book of Psalms, and a more general and easy Christian interpretation of "the Prayer Book of our Lord; and of His saints."

BUXTON VICARAGE, NORWICH,

March 20th, 1876.

* Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11; Heb. x. 38. This surely is one of those undesigned proofs of the authenticity of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which we know has been questioned.

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SERMON I.

Holy Communion.

"I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine altar; that I may shew the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth."—PSALM xxvi. 6-8.

IN this beautiful psalm David begins by praying to God to judge, examine, and prove him, before he drew nigh unto God; and then he turns to his own preparation of himself before engaging in God's holy service. First, you see, he prays God to do His part in preparing him; then he says how he has endeavoured to prepare himself, for God's service in His sanctuary. Taking the verses of my text alone, separate from the rest, let us remark these words in it especially, viz., "innocency," "altar," "thanksgiving," and "God's house."

The determination expressed thus: "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord: and so will I go to Thine altar," refers, no doubt, to the order given by Moses in Exodus xxx. 17-21, where we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and

thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations."

Of course, my brethren, with the light which we, as Christians, enjoy, we fully understand that these outward washings in approaching God were only of use as a sign of that inward cleansing of the heart from sin, and as an outward act of that reverence towards Almighty God, which He requires and expects of all who would desire to approach Him, who is the King of kings. Just as the wise king says: "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God; . . . for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth." But this external act of washing, at the very entrance of the house of God, was a sign to all generations of that inward cleansing of the heart, which every Israelite required before he could approach unto God acceptably; just as this same outward element of water has been "sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin," and is in baptism a *sign* of the inward cleansing of the soul from guilt; and also "a pledge to assure us thereof" in all

those who come to that first sacrament with true repentance and a lively faith.

And just as the priests of God were thus ordered by God Himself to wash before drawing nigh unto the altar of God to offer sacrifices unto the Lord, so, my brethren, must we, as the psalmist here says, "wash our hands in innocency" before we come to God's altar, and join in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for the death of Christ, and our redemption and salvation through Him.

You all know that to approach the altar of God, and there to partake of the holy sacrament of the Saviour's body and blood, is the highest act of worship and service, which any Christian can offer to Almighty God on this side the grave. It is the one only act of public worship which Christ our Lord has *Himself* instituted for His faithful people to join together in doing. And it is—remember this, as our Bishop told us in this Church some few years ago—the only thing He has instructed His Church in, *since* His ascension into heaven. He has ordered us *all* to "do this," and has told us very clearly and expressly that our spiritual life, and in some measure our future resurrection, depend upon our continually fulfilling this last command of His.* And so great is the necessity of our "washing our hands in innocency" before coming to God's altar, that to come there in wilful and unre-

* S. John vi. 48-58.

pented sin, makes us "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And thus many persons who do profess themselves to be disciples of Christ stay away altogether, and never do come unto the altar of God lest they should offend in this way. But only look for a moment at this great inconsistency on their part who do so. To come in impenitence or unbelief is indeed a very great sin; so great, that on the Corinthians it brought down instant punishment then and there. "For this cause some," says St. Paul, "are weak and sickly among you, and some are fallen asleep" in death. But is not a *perpetual disobedience* to the Saviour's last and express command surely as great a sin, or worse?

People go on saying year after year that they are afraid and unworthy to come so near unto God, "for our God is a consuming fire;" but the same persons never seem to feel afraid to go on continually breaking Christ's express command, "*Do this in remembrance of Me,*" time after time, month after month, year after year. All that God requires of us, that we may come acceptably is, that we do what the psalmist declares of himself in this first verse of my text, "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord: and so will I go to thine altar." We must put away our sins, and so come. We must find out our sins, that we may repent of them. We must examine ourselves, and compare our life and words and thoughts with God's holy will and words, then confess the sins we so discover in ourselves to

God, with full purpose of resisting them for the time to come, praying too for His grace and Holy Spirit's help to enable us to do so ; and then we ought to come every one of us, and we must come. We know not how greatly, if not entirely, our spiritual life is bound up, my brethren, in our frequent communions. It is by this holy sacrament, as our Prayer Book says, we are made one with Christ, and Christ one with us. It is to our souls what our daily food is to our bodies. How earnestly do we, my friends, who week by week minister here to your souls, how earnestly do we wish that we could move every one of you to say, "I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord : and so will I go to Thine altar : that I may shew the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works."

It is "thanksgiving" which gives to this highest act of Christian worship the name of "The Eucharist," for "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving." We then and there thank God, in the way which Christ has Himself ordained, for the blessings of our redemption from sin and death through Christ Jesus our Lord. We there plead thankfully and faithfully the merits of His death and passion ; and we apply them to ourselves, reminding God in heaven by this sign of the work done for us, and of all His promises to us for Christ's sake. These three words then, "innocency," "altar," and "thanksgiving," connect this verse immediately with the great and blessed act of commemoration of Christ's death and

Passion, which He Himself ordained for all who trust in Him to use, often and perpetually, again and again and again, until He comes Himself at the last day to judge the world. S. Paul says, "we have an altar." (Heb. xiii. 10.) There we commemorate the all-sufficient sacrifice of the death of Christ; in which act of worship we offer up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God, even the Father, for sending His Son, and to the Son for becoming man and dying for us; offering up at the same time ourselves, both in soul and body, to be His true and faithful people, truly repenting of our past sins and failings, and faithfully determining by God's help to lead a better and a holier life.

But to those who do this, how true a description are the next words of my text of what they feel in their inmost hearts: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thine Honour dwelleth." Nothing makes us so to love and honour God's house as a reverence and love for God's holy sacrament. One sure sign of love to God, and *that* is the first and greatest commandment of all, is a love for God's house, these earthly sanctuaries, where He vouchsafes to come, according to the never-failing promise of His Presence, with those who are gathered together in His Name. Our Lord Himself, the chief of saints, was, we are told, daily in the temple; and even when but twelve years of age He was lost for two whole days, He was found in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the learned men,

both hearing them, and asking them questions. David, the man after God's own heart, we know, desired to build a Temple to the Lord; but for the wars he had been engaged in, and the blood he had shed, he was not allowed to do so. It was given to Solomon to build the first grand earthly Temple for the honour of God. Till then God had had on earth but the Ark, which was removed from place to place. But God accepted at Solomon's hands a *fixed* habitation for Himself in Jerusalem. Here it was that the aged Simeon and Anna, who were day by day in the temple waiting upon God, were allowed at last to see God Himself present among men in the holy child Jesus. And after the ascension of our Lord, we find that the apostles "were daily in the temple praising and blessing God." And so, brethren, from that day to this all Christian people, who have ever loved God in their hearts, have loved "the habitation of His house: and the place where His honour dwelleth." We may say, as Jacob did at Bethel, "How dreadful" (how to be revered) "is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven."

And so be sure of this, brethren, if you wish to ascertain how much of true love to God you have in your hearts, you can measure it in no way so well as by the love you bear towards God's house.

It is the surest test we can discover of the warmth or coldness of our hearts to God. Love of God, and

love for His house, go inseparably together. And let us remember this: this is God's house not only during *service time*, as some seem to think, but *always*. Come in here on a week-day, or come on Sunday, come by day or come by night, it is ever the same—equally holy and to be revered—"the place where His Honour dwelleth," where Christ comes into the midst of us, where angels pass to and fro, as in Jacob's dream.

It is very sad to a religious-minded person, to think how many people care little or nothing for this holy place. Still we must not let our love wax cold, because sin may abound. If we each show that we do indeed honour God, and love the habitation of His House, we may set a good leaven at work, for men learn more by the eye than by the ear. And if when we go forth to our work and homes we show the effect and work of God's heavenly grace gained in church upon our hearts and in our lives: if we, brethren, show that true religion gives joy and not sorrow, makes a man to love his neighbour as himself, restrains our evil passions and our sinful words, oh, then may not others catch fire from our hearth, and learn to love as we love "the habitation of God's House: and the place where His Honour dwelleth"? Depend upon this, brethren, the welfare and happiness of every parish depend very much upon the love which men have for God's house. It helps us more than anything else can or will to realize things, which are higher and better than of this earth earthy.

We are here like men gazing on the picture of their early childhood's happy home in a far distant land, peopled with the faces and figures of those now "out of sight, but to memory dear." It is but a picture, but it is full of life; it bridges over the wide space between where we are and the old home, and in some measure places us rather there than here. So is our Parish Church to the devout Churchman. This is our Father's House, far off though He be, Who sees us, though we cannot see Him. But when we wash our hands in innocency, and offer unto Him the great sacrifice of thanksgiving, He welcomes us as His own children, and gives us not only pardon for the past, but grace unto grace for the time to come. "He keeps us as the apple of His eye." "He holds up our goings in His paths, that our footsteps slip not." "He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him." We may well desire for ourselves that this should be a true memorial of our life on earth. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thine Honour dwelleth."

SERMON II.

The House of Prayer for all People.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple."—PSALM xxvii. 4.

THESE words express very much the same devout feeling and love for God's house as those we last considered: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House: and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." When we read, as we may do, of the love which our Christian forefathers had for the houses of God that are in the land; how they stood continually open day and night, without risk of injury or irreverence; how day by day the sacrifice of prayer and praise ascended up from every Parish Church in the land to God's throne of grace; how God's House was indeed in those old times to all people a true house of prayer, as we see it to be in foreign lands, it is very sad, my brethren, to think how many churches in England in our day are altogether shut up from Sunday to Sunday; and many that are opened on week days, are opened for the use only of so very few indeed. We have almost entirely confined "the assembling of ourselves together" in

Church to Sunday alone, and even that is too much for many; for it is the rule of far the larger part of men and women alike, in all country parishes, I know, to confine their presence in church to one hour of a Sunday afternoon.

This also should be borne in mind, that habits of *private* devotion ever keep strict pace with habits of *public* worship, just as our Lord Jesus Christ used to rise up a great while before it was yet day, and go forth to His prayers, while at Jerusalem He was daily in the temple. Thus, I fear, we must conclude that the time given up by most persons in our day to acts of private devotion is very little indeed to what it used to be, because their time given to attendance in Church is so much less than it once was. Now one chief reason, as I have often said before, why it is desirable to open our Churches for prayer as often as possible is, that to far the greater part of all of us, except in times of sickness, when they are left alone, or nearly so, it must be, I am sure, most difficult to pray quietly and without disturbance in their own homes. In larger houses, where each person has a room to himself, it may be easy for people to fulfil, if they will, our Lord's direction, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." But it is otherwise in cottage homes. This, beyond any

other consideration, makes it so desirable that every Parish Church should be left open, and free of access, as much as possible. If a poor man or woman, some young man or child, just taught and impressed religiously at school, finds that he cannot pray in quiet and comfort at home, then he should have the opportunity of coming, as they do abroad, into God's house at any hour of the day, there to pray without hindrance or disturbance.

And it is, my friends, very disheartening to feel, after trying for twenty years past to give the people of this parish the opportunity of all this, at an hour when all their work is over for the day, how few, how very few, ever profit by *our* attendance here, through summer and winter, in heat or cold, snow or rain; but so many keep away altogether, so many more come once on Sunday to Church, and that is the sum and substance of all they openly give to God in each week. Only think how strikingly different was David's love for God's house to what ours is! In my text he says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days" (or every day) "of my life." And in the 84th Psalm, "O how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. . . . For one day in Thy courts is better than a thousand" out of them.

And when David speaks thus of His love for God's house, that to be there is the one thing above all others that he desired for himself, he is no doubt saying this not merely of and for himself, but for his great Descendant, the eternal Son of God, in the period of His life upon earth. We know that He was "daily in the temple" when at Jerusalem. When lost for two days at so early an age as twelve years, our English translation hardly gives the full meaning of His reply when found at last in the Temple. "He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me?" Apparently He meant *elsewhere* than where ye have now found Me. "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's (courts or temple)?" The Greek is, "In the — of my Father." Our English translation has it, "In my Father's business." His was not a once-a-week attendance, but daily when in Jerusalem. And one of the first, and one of the last, acts of His public ministry was to cleanse that Temple from all that defiled it, and hindered the reverence and devotion of the people and dishonoured God. By His single arm He drove out all the buyers and sellers who crowded its courts, exchanging the foreign money of Jews from foreign lands into the legal coin of Judæa, and selling oxen and doves for the various offerings and sacrifices ordered by the law. And could we, my brethren, but cleanse our hearts from all thoughts of buying and selling, of money, work, business, and cares, and make this more often our house of prayer, we might learn

by degrees to rival David in this, and so follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I very much wish you would all, both young and old, try to bestow a little more thought on these things. Our blessed Lord's words and example teach us exactly the same thing, as all human experience testifies to; that the more men wait upon God in public prayers and services, the more do they do the same in private; and private prayer makes us to love the house of public worship, and everything which has to do with it. They are, it is true, the footprints of a giant holiness, which our Lord has set upon the sand of time. Still, though we may be dwarfs, yet let us try to place our feet in those printmarks of His, following Him as our example, and studying to reproduce the outline in ourselves of His most holy life. And if He who did more in so little while than any one else has ever accomplished in a lifetime—if He found, or at least made times for prayer while others slept, spending whole nights in this office, as we know He did by the mere outline, which is all the gospels give us, of His life on earth, before calling the twelve to be apostles, after the great miracle of feeding the five thousand, and at the transfiguration, how can any of us ever say that he can find no time or place for prayer, and so gives it up! It is surely not David only, but Christ who most truly says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

And yet, after all, my brethren, this love for God's house, which I am so anxious you and I should have much more of in our hearts than we have now, what is it but as a means towards our attaining that far higher "House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens;" that Temple infinitely more glorious than we can imagine, in which God reigns, visibly surrounded by adorations of all Heavenly beings? It is there that God dwells, and there they who love Christ on earth are promised a home and place for ever and ever, and the vision of the Almighty. "In my Father's house are many mansions I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And S. Paul writes of it thus: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." These earthly temples which men rear on earth can be at best but the faintest possible resemblance to those things in the Heavens, that glorious Temple in which are making ready its "many mansions." Still they are, or ought to be, so far as we can make them, a resemblance in some sort of things in the Heavens: they are our training-ground, where we may learn to practise the perpetual occupation of Heaven. Just as the little light which a candle gives is but a poor substitute for the glorious brightness of a summer's sun, enlightening the whole

world, penetrating some ray into wells, and caves, and dark places of the earth, and bringing to perfection all the fruits and productions of our earth; yet, while we can have no sun, we are glad to avail ourselves of the bright shining light, which enables us to go about our business after dark, and to occupy in useful works of some kind, both our hearts and minds. And just as many a work would be impossible if we had no means of dispelling the darkness of sunset, so, brethren, God's earthly Temples are to every true Christian soul like the candle shining and throwing its light some little way amid surrounding gloom.

When the new-born sun arises each day, we no longer need artificial light, but extinguish our gloomy-looking lights against the light of day. Just so the day will come when there will be no more need of earthly Temples like this, in which we see God only by faith, and that darkly, and hear of Him only "as in the land which is very far off;" for we shall be where He is, and see Him with an unimpeded vision. "That city hath no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it; for the Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the Sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." This is to come; this is at last; at present, while we are in this life, we need these earthly Temples, that we may in and by them draw nigh unto

God. They are a light unto our path "amid encircling gloom." Would that we all could have more love for them! more love to beautify and care for them, "as patterns of things in the heavens;" more love to enter in, whether with the crowd of worshippers, or in the silence of our solitary footstep up the hallowed aisle. The great thing is, brethren, for us to try and realize the Presence of God. Everywhere. He is, and it is good if we so feel and believe. But here there is an inner Presence, as secret, yet in some way more true. Like the cloud descending at the door of the ark, and on the dedication of the temple, and as the Holy Dove lighted from heaven upon the head of the newly-baptized Saviour coming out of the water, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here, too, we come to receive those mystic elements, of which Christ says, "This is my Body;" "This is my Blood;" in a way not defined by Christ, so surely never to be defined by man, though one great branch of the Church has, to her own loss and to the division of Christendom, done so; while others abound who deny the very truths and reality of our Lord's words, because they cannot *see* the mode, or *define* exactly and sufficiently how that is done by Him, Who maketh the corn to grow and ripen, and the grass upon the mountains, and year by year clothes our earth with those beautiful flowers and lilies of the field, which no Solomon in his glory, nor skill of man since his day,

has ever equalled. Here, too, it is we bring our little ones to engraft them into the body of Christ's Church, by the initiatory sacrament He has instituted for the purpose. Here, too, we come to give the first earnest dedication of ourselves to God, as the first years of our childhood pass away, at Confirmation. Here we seek God's blessing upon that union of man and wife which is the perfection of human relationship. Here, too, we bring the last remains of our departed friends and neighbours, to commit their bodies to the earth, their souls into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour. Here at last, what a glorious awakening will there be ! Possibly few of our old Churchyards contain the remains of less than five to ten thousand bodies—more perhaps here; many, many more than that in numberless places. What an awakening will that be when each and every one of them stirs in his grave, and, like Lazarus, comes forth. So it will be. We shall love the place where we have risen to life eternal; let us love it now. It is, as I say, bound up with every greater event in the life of each of us. It is especially associated with one day in every week which we pass on earth. Let us love it every day, and at all times, and be able to say with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life."

SERMON III.

Seedtime and Harvest.

"O save Thy people, and give Thy blessing unto thine inheritance: feed them, and set them up for ever."—PSALM xxviii. 10.

THIS psalm, like so many others, divides itself into two distinct parts. We have noticed this particularly in the 22nd Psalm, which begins with the very words used by our Lord upon the cross, and gives us many minute particulars respecting the Crucifixion, but afterwards changes into a song of triumph, and passes from the Cross to the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. So in this psalm. It begins with an earnest supplication to God to hear the psalmist's prayer; thus: "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord my strength: think no scorn of me; lest, if Thou make as though Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down to the pit (the grave). Hear the voice of my humble petitions, when I cry unto Thee: when I hold up my hands towards the mercy-seat of Thy holy Temple." But at the seventh verse you will see how entirely the tone of the psalm changes. It passes from prayer to praise, from entreating God to listen, to re-

joining in His having assuredly heard and answered the psalmist's earnest supplication ; thus : " Praised be the Lord : for He hath heard the voice of my humble petitions. The Lord is my strength and my shield ; my heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped : therefore my heart danceth for joy, and in my song will I praise Him."

I think one beautiful illustration of such waiting upon God, with its sure success, as described in this psalm, is afforded us in the Gospel for the seventh Sunday after Trinity, which is preceded, as you may remember, by that beautiful collect, " Lord of all power and might, Who art the Author and Giver of all good things." S. Mark's words these are : " In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat : and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way : for divers of them came from far." The connection between this psalm and this gospel lies in the patience and earnestness of this large multitude abiding with Christ for three whole days, perfectly regardless of their bodily wants, far from their homes, but finding all their needs supplied in a moment by miracle by Him who in the beginning made the world, and all that is therein. This waiting upon Him in this way was really a three days' prayer—three days spent in prayer to God ; for they came seeking the

Bread of life, forgetting that they had with them nothing to eat. Was it not a most true fulfilment, on each like occasion, of those words He has left us all—"Seek ye *first*" (that is, above and before all other things) "the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you;" and those with which the sermon on the mount began—"Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"? We must prove the sincerity of our desires before we can expect our prayers to be answered. Even S. Paul, when he felt that bodily affliction (apparently, from other passages, affecting his eyesight), which he calls "a thorn in the flesh,"* a hindrance, as he had found it be, to the effect of his preaching, prayed that it might be taken away from him. Yet three times, like the multitude's remaining three days in the wilderness, he repeated his prayer before any answer was received to it. But the answer so delayed, when granted, was far higher and better than he had ever expected or hoped for. He was told, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

It is a common thing, brethren, for Satan to whisper to any man's heart, "It is no use going on with this

* There is on this point a valuable note in Bishop Sumner's work on *The Ministerial Character of Christ*, p. 555 (edition 1835), on Gal. iv. 14-16, "Where is the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me."

prayer of yours. Better leave it off, and think of something else. God does not mean to give you your desire, or He would have done so before this," and so on. Now, if a man listens to this sort of suggestion, it betrays a failing of faith, and of trust in God, which may end in great unbelief. If we would gain what we desire in prayer, we must persevere, and not give up. We must bide God's time, and not fix our own for His answer, or always look for His answer exactly in the way we ourselves expected and intended. S. Paul's prayer is answered in the end; but it is very differently from what he intended and desired. The multitude in the wilderness, who so eagerly followed Christ into the wilderness, are sent none of them empty away. So this psalm begins by praying God to hear, and so soon after rejoices in His having done so.

And just so, brethren, with ourselves on all sides of us at this moment. It was but a few weeks ago I directed your thoughts, especially on those three days preceding the Ascension of our Lord into heaven, which for this purpose are called "Rogation days" in our Prayer Book—I directed your thoughts to the use and necessity of earnest prayer to God to bless our fields and lands, and to give us both rain and sunshine in their due measure and proportion, that so when this moment of Harvest arrived, which is now going on, we might rejoice in the abundance of those fruits of the earth which are the staff of man's life.* I never think in our day enough

* *Prayer to be used often in spring-time, but especially upon the three*

is thought of this—how we need God's blessing and providence upon the growth of all corn and fruits of the earth. It may be we *have* thankful hearts in us to acknowledge His gifts after they are gathered in; and it is well if it is so. And no doubt there is readiness enough to complain of any failure or imperfection of the Harvest; of a blight above ground, or below at the root; of too much heat, or of too much rain. But I do not think we pray often enough, as we all might do, for God's blessing upon the seed we sow in the earth, as Spring and Summer advance, and the tender blade rears its thin stalk above ground, and then puts forth the ear, and then that turns into the bright and golden hue of its perfection and ripeness. It is surely one of the most beautiful petitions in our Litany, in which all the year long we call this subject to mind, and pray God three times in each week, by the order of our Prayer Book, "to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them." Let us year by year remember to do

Rogation days, which are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension-day, distributed yearly in Church on fifth Sunday after Easter.

O Lord, who art the Author and Giver of all good things, by Whose mercy Thy people are fed, we pray Thee to send Thy blessing upon our fields and lands, giving us such a measure of rain and of sunshine that they may yield us an abundant Harvest, and all the best fruits of the earth in their due season; and give us thankful hearts to praise Thee for all Thy goodness to us, and more and more Thy most Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Buxton, May 15th, 1873.

both. Let us pray for God's Blessing upon the corn when first growing, and thank Him for His Gifts when received and gathered in. The yearly Harvest is really as great a miracle, though we think so little about it, as were those two miracles related in the Gospels—the feeding of the five thousand, and the feeding of the four thousand. God does the same in both—only those miracles of multiplication were the work of a moment, whereas the yearly miracle is one of comparatively slow growth, requiring all the prolonged providence over it of rain and sunshine, of cold and heat, and of protection from the ravages of birds, of insects, and of blight, and from storms of wind and rain. If we would then desire to do as this psalm does—pass from asking to receiving, from prayer to praise, let us not forget the first duty at the fitting moment. The psalmist says in my text, “Give Thy blessing unto thine inheritance : *feed* them, and set them up for ever.”

Not the most careful forethought, not the most unceasing care and labour on man's part, can assure us in any year a bountiful Harvest, and seasonable weather to gather it all in. These, brethren, are God's special gifts to us—as much a *gift* as was the multiplication of the loaves distributed by the hands of the Apostles, and as the Manna which fell night by night for forty years like snow around the tents of Israel. It is well that we should be from time to time reminded of these things ; for we are apt to receive all *common* blessings of this

life as a matter of course, and so oftentimes God recalls to mind His part in providing for our necessities by sending a blight or a positive famine upon a land. Still, after all, these works of God for man, and of man for himself, are but for a time. Earthly harvests should ever carry on our thoughts to that great Harvest which has yet to come, when we shall all be either the wheat or the tares gathered in, and shall also receive as our Harvest for ever the fruits and result of all our life on earth. Then will God do to all of us as this psalm says—"Reward them according to their deeds: and recompense them after the work of their hands: pay them that they have deserved."

If then, my brethren, our life on earth is, or ought to be, like the beginning of this psalm—*i.e.* a continual praying to God, a lifting of our hands and hearts towards the mercy-seat of His holy Temple in Heaven, so too will the latter part of it be our true portion for ever. We shall then see and know how God supplied our daily wants; how He fed us with heavenly food; how He poured His grace, unknown and unobserved, into our hearts, like the silent seed we ourselves have sown from time to time. Then shall we know how He has been our strength, and our shield: "My heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped." Then shall we understand, no doubt, that great mystery which is now the test and trial of faith in so many of us—how His Body is made to be our spiritual food, His Blood our spiritual drink;

when, like the multitude waiting upon Him in the wilderness, we follow Him where He calls us ; and, as He did in both those miracles, "take bread, and bless it, and break it, and gave it to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." It was a scant supply to the outward eye of sense ; but it grew imperceptibly, and wasted not. They did all eat, and were satisfied ; yet was there far more left, after all had eaten, than there had been in the beginning.

Oh that we would but try to bear these two miracles in mind as often as we draw nigh unto the table of the Lord ! Let us not define what the Lord has not defined. Let us not limit the mode and operation of His institution by the limitations of our finite understanding ; but let us rather believe and obey. Though we see the corn grow from the seed to the blade above and root below, and then into ear, and then to ripeness ; yet no skill of man has yet divined how all this process is accomplished. We cannot make one single seed of any kind which shall develop itself into its own species by a like process of life, and growth, and increase. Yet, knowing that it is so, we sow, and plant, and labour for the Harvest. Be as wise in the matters of thy soul. Do not ask to see, but believe. Only do as Christ bids us all to do ; and remember His own words, true to all time, "Blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed."

SERMON IV.

The Continual Dew of Thy Blessing.

"It is the Lord, that commandeth the waters : it is the glorious God, that maketh the thunder. It is the Lord, that ruleth the sea."

PSALM xxix. 3, 4.

OUR thoughts are very much directed, at most periods of the year, to the works of God in the fields around us ; but never more so than just before and just after the greatest and most important of all earthly works in each year—the Harvest. On the Harvest, more than anything else, depends the welfare of all, as it regulates the price of all *other* necessities to man's existence. But it is well for us to remember at all seasons God's works and power, and not on land only, but in the waters and the sea. Few of us, I suppose, pass a day without some attention to "the weather," as we call it, hoping or expecting sunshine or rain, cold or heat, and so forth. Here the psalmist says : "It is the Lord that commandeth the waters : it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder : it is the Lord that ruleth the sea." Let us give our thoughts to these things to-day. We all know both by Revelation and by natural instinct, that God made both the sea and the dry land.

They could never have made themselves, for they possess no creative power in themselves any more than we ourselves do. But, happily for us, God in His goodness not only made them, but watches over and controls them. If we apply the word "water" in my text as referring to the supply of rain and moisture, and confine "sea" to that great salt lake which surrounds all lands, in both alike God's care and Providence are manifested every day we live. If we think for a moment what immediate distress it causes if either rain or drought happen in the least to an excessive degree in any place, we shall be thankful, I am sure, that we are so continually spared the suffering which would arise if either fell upon us in excess. Even a few days only of excessive rain surrounds many large towns in our land with a sea of waters which, if it continued many days, would entirely ruin land, and houses, and health; and, on the other hand, we experience every now and then, in the scanty crops which earth yields in return for all man's labour, the effect of but a little more drought and heat that usually happens in our land. But, in His great care and goodness towards us, God sends us a wonderful equality of rain and drought one year with another. Probably, taking a course of five or ten years together, the amount of heat and of wet is exactly an average in each period. But I think we do not often reflect how great and constant a Providence all this displays. It might be that all the fine and dry weather

of a year should fall upon *one* country or neighbourhood, and all the wet and rain of a year upon another; but as a general rule, in all lands and to all people alike, God "maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust." "He sendeth rain into the little valleys, and maketh them soft with the drops of rain." On the other hand, in all parts of the earth which man inhabits, north or south, east or west, "He hath set a tabernacle for the Sun, which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the earth, and runneth about unto the end of it again, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

And if we turn to the latter sentence of my text, how true is it that "it is the Lord that *ruleth* the sea." If it were not for God's order and providence, how soon might all the world be drowned, or one part at one time and another at another, as it was in the Flood, by the waters of the sea breaking loose over all lands. If you look on the proud waves of the sea on a stormy day, and watch them beat upon the sandy beach, what is it that stays them there, so that they are never known to transgress beyond a certain well-defined and anciently-marked limit? That rope of sand upon every sea-shore, of which each and every particle will separate itself in our hands from the rest, yet forms a barrier which those irresistible waves of ocean never break through.

What a special Providence is this! The restless sea always moving and beating with never-changing force upon the shore, yet never goes beyond its own fixed and proper limit. Why is this? Simply, my brethren, from the truth expressed in my text—"It is the Lord that *ruleth* the sea."

And so the prophet Jeremiah especially alludes to this power and Providence of God over us as a token not only of His power, but of His goodness to man, and as a cause for thankfulness and service on our part. His words are: "O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

And thus, my brethren, we have two great causes of thankfulness to God expressed in my text in this outward world: "It is the Lord that commandeth the waters:—dew, rain, and snow—It is the Lord that ruleth the sea." He Who in the beginning said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so."—He Who in the days of His earthly life walked upon the sea as upon dry land—He who "arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm;" so that "the

men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"—He still remembers us, and protects and defends us, that a flood of waters should no more descend upon the earth and overflow it.

But there is a still higher and better thought to be gathered from this subject, for God's works in this outward world of nature are very similar to, and betoken His works in the spiritual world of men's souls. And does not the rain which cometh down from Heaven, moistening the parched land, and making it to bring forth its fruits and its flowers, does it not remind us of those gifts of Grace which come down from Him into the hearts of faithful people, making them to bring forth the fruits of righteousness unto God, those blessed fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance?" And that troubled sea, which never rests, which is so powerful to move and overwhelm the very largest ships and swallow them up in a moment; that sea, so full of life, abounding in productiveness far beyond the productiveness of earth, keeping alive in its waters immense multitudes of every kind of fish and marine animals; does it not remind us of this world in which the wicked are described as "like unto the troubled sea, which cannot rest, but casts up mire and dirt"? And the Holy Spirit's description of the heavenly New Jerusalem, wherein God's people shall rest at last and live

for ever, contains one special fact to express its peace and calm: "There shall be no more sea," no more troubles, and no more separation of one people from another as now.

Thus, I think, my brethren, we may take a few thoughts home with us to-day on both these subjects. First, more constantly than any rain falls from heaven, more abundant than any showers, more productive of good fruit than the most lovely rain upon a dry land, falls down from heaven upon the souls of the faithful, God's sweet and heavenly grace. Like the air we breathe, nay, even more secretly than that—for that we often hear the sound of, though we cannot see it—the Dew of God's grace cometh down into a man's heart, and abideth there. Oftentimes like the secret spring, of which we know nothing till we have dug a well deep into the bowels of the earth, and find it to flow forth, so to Christ's own people, the Church of the first-born, there is in them "a well of water springing up unto eternal life." So sure is this, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But still it is a spring which requires to be continually drawn upon and replenished. No man can stand still in grace; either he must *lose* some portion of what he has, or *gain* more beyond his present enjoyment. And to cast out, as many, alas! do, this gift from themselves, and bring it to nought, is in very truth to "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

Therefore, my brethren, as ye would desire the dews of Heaven, and rejoice as often as you see the gentle showers of rain falling upon your thirsty fields or garden-land in summer, remember by those drops of rain how in like measure God is willing to give you the abiding influences of His Holy Spirit, only you must seek those gifts for yourselves; you must ask Him for them; you must seek for them; and having received them, you must take care to use them and to employ them. These gifts of the Spirit are as boundless and inexhaustible as that Ocean on which "the Spirit of God brooded" or hovered in the beginning. Like the open sea, they are free to all that will use them; like the ship which has all its sails set, so by them we may so pass over the troubled waters of this world as in the end to reach, and be for ever "in the haven where we would be."

And this gift of God it is which, like the Saviour's word to the angry winds and waves of Gennesaret, quells the tumult of all our evil passions, of our evil tempers, of our sinful words and desires. He speaks, and all is then peace. He commands, and even the winds and the sea obey Him. Even in the calmest day at sea, there is still some motion in the vessel, some surging of the waves around it; so it must ever be with our own spiritual state while in this life. Still "it is the Lord that ruleth the sea." Our temptations need not overcome us; our vessel need not be wrecked;

our salvation need not be taken away from us. There is a power in us, a power given to us in the Church of Christ, greater than the sea, stronger than the waves. It is the Presence of Christ Himself in our hearts. We are members of His body. Because He lives, we shall live also. Our resurrection will be to eternal life, because He is in us Who "is the Resurrection and the Life." Let us not be faithless, but believing. When the disciples were in jeopardy upon the sea of Galilee, they were frightened and alarmed. They need not have been so. He was with them Who held all elements in His own hands. He "Who spake the word, and they were made; Who commanded, and they were created;" He had but to open His lips, and by one word all was still. "Immediately they were at the land, whither they went." There was no power to stay their course; no power to harm them. But so it is ever with us. Jesus Christ is our hope, and our defence. He never leaves us. "He commandeth the waters; He ruleth the sea." In His strength our old sins cease to have power over us; our will is set free from the dominion of Satan; the powers of our regenerate life multiply within us. Let us only seek that grace, and try to use it. Till we try, we know not how much we may accomplish. It is the combination of God's work with our efforts. It is His doing, yet through every man's hearty co-operation with His grace. And though, as we are told in one place, "Work out your salvation with fear and

trembling," yet after all our best efforts "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." It is ever true, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON V.

Thanksgiving and Prayer.

"For His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is life: heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—PSALM xxx. 5.

THIS psalm appears to have been composed by David after his recovery from some severe sickness; for he says in the second verse, "O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast *healed* me." It is therefore a psalm most fitted for any of us to use after our recovery from any great sickness, or preservation in any great danger. Alas! there are many, we know, upon whom all such mercies seem to be thrown away. They repine at sickness, and their hearts are sometimes stirred and affected by it so long as it lasts; but when it is over, in many of us there is no remembrance of the mercy of God thus shown to us in our recovery, little or no gratitude felt for what God has done for us. We take it all as a matter of course, and rise up and return to our usual work in life, but little, if at all, altered for the better, or that perhaps only for a little while, by what we may so lately have gone through. The story of the ten lepers, which is read as the gospel for the

14th Sunday after Trinity, is but too true a history of human nature and man's ingratitude in every generation on earth. "Were there not ten cleansed?" said the Lord; "but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Go in peace: thy faith hath made thee whole." Let us remember from this, my brethren, that gratitude and thanksgiving to God after any and every special mercy we may have received, and a daily thanksgiving for our daily and perpetual mercies, is at least as necessary and right as it is for us to pray for His pardon and forgiveness for all we do amiss, and for His goodness and protection while our trial lies upon us.

I do not think gratitude is one of those Christian graces which is common in men's hearts of our generation. We are cast down and sad enough if we are in pain and tribulation; but no sooner is the trial past than we forget the goodness and mercy which has been shown us. We very soon forget benefits we have received. There is so seldom, at least for all the rest of our days, a feeling in our hearts like that which the psalmist expresses, when he says at the beginning of this psalm, "I will magnify Thee, O Lord; for Thou hast lifted me up, and not made my foes to triumph over me. . . . Thou, Lord, hast brought my soul out of hell (the grave): Thou hast kept my life from them that go down to the pit. Sing praises unto the Lord, O

ye saints of His, and *give thanks* unto Him for a remembrance of His holiness." This, then, seems to be the primary subject of this psalm, thanksgiving to God for recovery and restoration to health and life after pain and sickness.

And how true and beautiful a description is that which my text contains of every man's daily experience of God's goodness towards us, notwithstanding our many and grievous offences against Him! "His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is life: heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Just as the darkness of night is a figure to us of the blackness and darkness of sin in God's sight, and of the consequent withdrawal of His favour, so day by day does the return of light remind us of God's goodness and long-suffering. "His mercies are new every morning." How ready He is to forgive! How willing He is to take us back again into His favour and protection! It was David's experience that God's anger endureth but for a moment. "Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man." Immediately it follows, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." In His favour standeth our eternal life. If weeping endure for a night, joy is almost sure to come in the morning. So is this our experience also. "Every cloud has its silver lining," and it is happy for us that it is so; for if all were sorrow with any of us, the heart would soon die down within us; or if all were for ever

joy and health and prosperity, there are very few indeed of us who would still hold us fast by God. It is sad to think that very few persons can endure prosperity for long, and live unto God; but so it is. Earthly good is only too apt to draw off our hearts from God; therefore it is that our Lord Himself tells us that it requires far more grace from God to save a rich man than a poor man, simply because this world has so much greater hold upon his heart, and in many ways his temptations to sin and selfishness are so much greater. And so of all other kinds and degrees of outward prosperity, God's goodness to us, instead of leading us, as it ought, to love, fear, and honour Him who is the Author and Giver of all good things, always without His special grace does exactly the reverse. It makes us love this world, and the things that are in the world; and in proportion as we love it supremely, and set our hearts upon it and serve it, we cease to love God, and to give our first and best powers of soul and body to Him, Who is so good to us. Therefore it is, I am sure, that sorrows and troubles are so often, so thickly, so freely, distributed around us. Here is their secret cause. Heaviness comes for a night, then follows the change and relief—"joy cometh in the morning." No sooner is the penitent heart really broken and cast down with the sense of sin than God sends His heavenly Comforter, and restores peace and joy and light to the contrite, meek, and lowly. Thus in every way my text describes not only *David's* experi-

ence of joy and health after sorrow and sickness, but we find it equally true to ourselves in our own experience of life.

But these words describe to us also the history of that great night of the Atonement, when, after the last supper, in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord's sweat was great drops of blood; when, for our sakes, He endured all that contradiction of sinners against Himself; when He was betrayed and sold, condemned and crucified, and His sacred Person hung lifeless on the Cross of shame. He was then enduring for us the wrath of God upon sin and sinners. He put Himself, in our stead, under the displeasure of God the Father, that "He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." But all these great events, which will have their fruit not only in this world unto its last hour, but for ever and ever in the life to come, how truly may they be summed up in these words: "The wrath of God endureth but for a moment; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." There was that one long Good Friday, and the one day's silence in the tomb; but all was altered when on that Easter morn the sun rose upon the tomb, already empty; for death was swallowed up of life, and the Resurrection of man had begun while it was yet dark, nor had the Angel rolled back the great stone which closed the solid grave.

Or take again the whole period of this life of ours on

earth, and here again the description holds good. "God's wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is light: heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

This whole world is full of sorrows. It has the curse of sin resting upon it; and in one way or other all the sorrow and suffering in the world are the result of sin, and are also its punishment in this life, and so it will go on up to its last day. This must ever be a world of sorrow, *because* it is a world of sin. Man has rebelled against his Maker, and yields himself in perpetual generations to be the servant of sin unto death; and as regularly God's wrath follows upon man's disobedience. Every secret sin of ours is set in the light of His countenance; all is known unto Him. No word is so secret, no thought so inwardly wrapt up in the silence of our hearts, no night is so dark, no deed is so cleverly and carefully concealed from the eyes and knowledge of others, but all is penetrated by the all-seeing eye, and is known unto God. Still, though all this goes on, never ending, ever beginning, what is all its continuance at furthest but a "heaviness enduring for a night, joy coming in the morning"? "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." In the glories of the Resurrection there will be no more remembrance of sin and death. Eternity has no night, no sea of troubles as we have here, no failing or falling away. How we shall all despise the littleness of this

world, when we enjoy the greatness of eternity! How we shall wonder that we or others thought so much and so anxiously of the mean and trivial things of our mortal life, when we are made partakers through Christ of the joys, which are at His right hand for evermore! And that little period of sleep between our giving back to God our being, and lying down in our graves, what will that appear to those who share Christ's Immortality, and reign with Him for ever and ever! Surely then, if never before, we shall indeed feel and say, "God's wrath endureth but for a moment; in His pleasure is life: heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"—the morning of the resurrection.

Now it is good for us, my brethren, to keep these thoughts constantly before us. It is a great thing to take our hearts as much and as often as possible out of the things of time, and fix them upon the things which are eternal in the Heavens. It will help us more than anything else to fulfil those remarkable words of Christ our Lord: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you." It is the reverse of what most of us do; but therein lies the very proof of our faith, or of our want of faith. God says to us, Give up your love for any one or any thing in this world, and fix it *supremely* upon Me. People in general act upon the very contrary rule, and love this world, and all that is in it, at best giving to God but the spare moments and the crumbs

and corners of their time, of their thoughts, and their love; and then they wonder that these things fail them, and God fails them too. It is the perpetual experience of our race, which is set forth in the very words which follow my text, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be removed: Thou, Lord, of Thy Goodness hast made my hill so strong. Thou didst turn Thy face from me: and I was troubled." How far happier for us to feel that God is ever watching over us for good, because we love Him; and so good comes out of evil, and light shines in on us in every dark place. We find, as the psalmist says, "When I said, My foot hath slipped; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul."

SERMON VI.

The last Words of Christ.

*"Into Thy hands I commend My spirit: for Thou hast redeemed Me,
O Lord, Thou God of truth."*—PSALM xxxi. 6.

WE have already observed, that the first words of the 22nd Psalm are the fourth of the seven sayings on the Cross—that great and exceeding bitter cry which went up to Heaven as the midday darkness began to clear away—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Here in my text is another of the seven sayings, recorded by S. Luke alone—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." (Ch. xxiii. 46.) Nothing can make us Christians to love the book of Psalms so much as the reflection that they, just as we have them, were the Saviour's own book of prayers; that as God's people for three thousand long years have daily used these sacred compositions in their acts of prayer, praise, and thanksgivings to God, so we have these sure indications that our Lord Himself did so, that they were so familiar to Him, and thus He has set His seal upon their inspiration and excellence. There are other passages

from the Psalms quoted by our Lord, and others applied to Him by the Apostles; but those first words of the 22nd Psalm, and these first words of my text from the 31st Psalm, were, we know, our Lord's own words uttered from the Cross—those of to-day the very *last* of the seven sentences—the very last words, with which Christ died with them upon His lips.

There can be no doubt that David was in one of his many sore trials and dangers when he wrote this psalm; for we find him saying at the 10th verse, "Mine eye is consumed for very heaviness;" at the 11th, "My life is waxen old with heaviness, and my years with mourning;" at the 13th, "I became a reproof among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours;" at the 15th, "Fear is on every side, while they conspire together against me, and take their counsel to take away my life." This was his state of fear and danger at the moment; but then, what effect had all this upon him? Only to make him trust the more upon God. The expression of this feeling of trust and confidence in God's care and love is as frequent as his sense of danger. In the very first verse he says, "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust;" in my text (verse 6), "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" in the next verse, "My trust hath been in the Lord;" in the 16th verse, "But my hope hath been in Thee, O Lord: I have said, Thou art my God;" in the 18th verse, "Shew Thy servant the light of Thy countenance, and save me for Thy mercy's

sake ;” and at the 21st verse there is this beautiful exclamation, “O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee : and that Thou hast prepared for them that put their trust in Thee, even before the sons of men !” And, once more, look at this admonition to others : “O love the Lord, all ye His saints : for the Lord preserveth them that are faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer.” Still, out of this whole psalm there are no words so sacred and memorable as those of my text, “Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,” because they are the very words, as I have said, which our great Redeemer died with upon His lips. In Him were all the troubles of David far exceeded and surpassed. Even His great and terrible bodily sufferings, which we dwelt upon while considering the 22nd Psalm, were, we believe, as nothing compared to the agony of soul and spirit through which the Saviour passed in His work for our Redemption. There is no pulpit like the Cross, from which so much is to be learnt—none so great a sign-post along the pathway to heaven. It is but natural that those words, above all others, would be most deeply treasured up in the hearts and memories of His Apostles ; and we have one direct proof of this in the prayer of His first martyr, S. Stephen, at the moment of his death. He kneeled down, and prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ;” while His last words, very like to the Saviour’s first from the Cross, were, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ;”

as his Master had said, "Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do."

And surely, my brethren, these words of my text are very true and beautiful words for each of us to use continually for ourselves ; and above all, as so many great saints are recorded to have done, at the moment of our death, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth." How often would it be well for us to repeat this when we first wake in the morning, and have all the day before us, when we think of ourselves as fulfilling once more those expressive words, "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." How little do any of us know, and how seldom are we able to reckon for certain upon anything which may happen to us during the day. Day by day, as we know, many leave their homes never to return to them again ; others in the course of a day meet with accidents, fortunate or unfortunate, which shape and change, if they do not altogether mar and disappoint, their whole work and prospects in life. We often talk, it is true, with great assurance of our plans, and hopes, and expectations ; but how often does the event belie the anticipation ? It is so truly said in this psalm we are considering, "My time is in Thy hand." What then is right, or what is better, than that we should humbly yet confidently commit ourselves, and all we are or have, to God's gracious care and guidance and protection, and say, in

the words of my text, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth"? This is exactly to do what the apostle S. James would lead us to, by saying, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. For *that* ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we should do this, or that."

Again, at night, when the day's work is over, when, good or bad, its record has been entered on the registers, which never fade or perish, what is better than that we should, with the same blessed confidence and trust with which we went forth in the morning to our work of the day, commit ourselves afresh to God's holy keeping through the silent hours of the night, and pray for the protecting care of His Angels, and say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth"? Our lying down at night should be a daily reminder to us all how soon at furthest we shall be lying in our graves, as our rising up in the morning may be as true a reminder to us of our Resurrection at the dawn of the Great Day of all. If, brethren, we are mindful of the mercies which we every day receive, how God provides all things that are good and necessary for every one of

us ; how often the very wants and distresses of sickness or poverty are His special instruments to raise us up friends ; how often we have been preserved from accidents and dangers which fall on others, but have not touched us ; when we think of our many daily sins and transgressions in one way or other, and yet God spares us ; how often good has been within our power, but we have neglected to follow or do it ; when we think of the need we all have of rest to recruit our powers of mind and body, and enable us to go forth with strength and energy to the work which lies before us, how can any one who is not altogether blind and dead, like unto the brutes that perish, lay his head down upon his pillow without humbly thanking the great Giver of all good for the Blessings he enjoys, and commend his body, soul, and spirit into God's safe keeping, saying, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth"?

And once more, when we feel and know our end to be near at hand, how blessed for us if we are able then humbly but confidently to rest our souls upon the Almighty Lord ; if we are able so far to follow Christ as to be able to say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth." It is then indeed that a true faith brings its own sure peace and comfort to the Christian's heart. When this world is all past and gone to him ; when he feels that another sun, or perhaps not even that, will

be all that will ever rise and set to him in this life ; when he has carefully looked back through his past life, and while asking God's forgiveness for all his unnumbered sins and offences, sees how His grace has worked in him and with him ; how through this secret power of God he has gone on from grace to grace, from strength to strength, how will such an one humbly but thankfully say, with the assurance of faith, as so many have been known to do before—S. Polycarp, S. Basil, S. Bernard, and many others—"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit : for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth." But let us not hope that we may take all this comfort and assurance to ourselves on false grounds. We are told that men's estimates of others will be strangely reversed at last, and "many that *are* first will be last ; and the last will be first then." And if we would desire for ourselves that we may at our last *die* the death of the righteous, we must, brethren, *live* the life of faith and righteousness *while we are* in health and strength. Christ is our Redeemer from sin, not in our sins. Nothing we can name is so sure as that we shall each be judged at the last day according to the deeds done in the body. Christ has gained for us, by the sacrifice of Himself, not only Redemption from eternal death, as the penalty of sin, but Redemption from the power of sin also. We cannot say, as they of old might, that we are altogether unable and powerless to resist the devil, and so to conquer. The

Saviour has taught us how that may be done. He has shown us how to do so in His own most holy life and person ; and that we may do this, He gives us His Holy Spirit, as it dwelt without measure in Him. He assures us that no prayer shall ever fail of being accepted through His name. He feeds us with the bread of heaven, and makes us one with Himself, and becomes "*Christ in us*, the hope of glory." What more could be done, which He has not done for us? What less can we do than often say and feel, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit: for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth."

SERMON VII.

The Forgiveness of Sins.

*"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose
spirit there is no guile. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord ;
and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin."*

PSALM xxxii. 1, 2, 6.

THIS is the second of those seven psalms called "The Penitential Psalms," all of which are appointed in our Prayer Book for our use on Ash-Wednesday. In this psalm David describes his own feelings and experience in his repentance, his longing for God's pardon and forgiveness; and then God is represented as speaking to him, and from him to Israel.

Just as the sick man looks back upon his days of health and strength, and may grieve to think that they are all past and gone to him, so is David eloquent upon the blessedness of obtaining pardon from God from the remembrance of his earlier state of acceptance. Now he recalls the misery he went through before he was moved to repentance, saying, "While I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining. For Thy hand is heavy upon me day and night; and my moisture is like the drought in summer." Then he is moved to repentance, and to that confession of his

sins which is always a necessary and sure part of true repentance: "I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin." Then comes the answer of God to his prayer and confession: "I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go; and I will guide thee with Mine eye. Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding: whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee." Then he returns to the blessedness of enjoying peace with God: "Great plagues remain for the ungodly: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side."

This will give you a general outline of the subject of this penitential psalm. We may perhaps remember how expressly the first words of it are used by S. Paul in his epistle to the Romans.* S. Paul there brings forward the first words of this 32nd Psalm to prove the universal sinfulness of mankind, but God's forgiveness of all sins to the faithful and penitent. So universal is sin and corruption in man, that he says David asserts truly, that the man is "*blessed* whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin."

Now let us ask, first of all, how far have we a clear view in ourselves of what sin is—in what it consists?

* Chap. iv. 7, 8.

And then let us look to the way and conditions by which sin is forgiven to any of us.

S. John tells us in very few words what sin is when he says, "Sin is the transgression of the law;" that is, of God's law. And S. Paul states the same fact when he says, "For where no law is, there is no transgression." Every word, every act, every thought of ours, which in any way offends against God's will and law, is sin. And we all know that through the power which Satan has gained in the world, and through the natural corruption and sinfulness of our fallen nature, there is not one of us who ever can fulfil the whole law, or ever has done so perfectly, no one but our Lord Jesus Christ. As S. James says, "In many things we offend *all*." Such is our state, that though the wickedness of one man often is so much greater than that of another, yet "if we" (that is, any one of us) "say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Thus we arrive at this fundamental truth, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And this being so, what has God done that we may obtain pardon and forgiveness? How can man be reconciled to God, and yet God, who is infinitely just and holy, have His justice for sin satisfied?

Now, my brethren, to obtain forgiveness of our sins, God has given us three great gifts. First, a *meritorious* cause of forgiveness; secondly, a *conditional* cause of forgiveness; and thirdly, a means, or *instrumental* cause

of forgiveness. First, the *meritorious* cause of all forgiveness of sin to man is the Sacrifice and Death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "He died for all men, that all men through Him might be saved." "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Behold the Lamb of God, That taketh away the sin of the world." This is how the great atonement of the Cross is stated again and again in God's holy word. None can take from its fulness, and no time and no age can ever exhaust its merits and efficacy. God has once for all accepted the death of His eternal Son in man's nature, in man's stead. So much for the *meritorious* cause of all forgiveness; it is our dear Lord and Saviour's precious Cross and Passion which has satisfied God's wrath upon man's sin and disobedience.

Then, secondly, as to the *condition* upon which this forgiveness is freely bestowed upon any man; or are we to suppose that the merits of Christ are of efficacy for all the world, whether they know of Him or not? I need scarcely answer such a question. We all well know that *we* have a part to do on our side to claim to ourselves the Saviour's work, and that is, we must come to God with repentance and faith. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Our faith is as true a *condition* of forgiveness, as the Saviour's Cross is the only *meritorious* or *deserving* cause of the pardon of

our sins. If a man asks, like the gaoler at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" we can only answer to every such question as S. Paul did to him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

This, then, is the second step to our assured pardon and forgiveness. First comes the Cross of Christ on *God's* part; next, repentance and faith on *our* part; then, thirdly, how do we know and are assured that we have not believed all this in vain? How can any man tell for certain, if he has come to God with true repentance and a lively faith, that God has indeed forgiven him for Christ's sake; that "he is accepted in the Beloved"? Are we to trust to our feelings and assurance for this? Has God given us no means, no sign, no pledge of His forgiveness, and of our freedom from the power of sin and death? Suppose a prisoner were shut up in gaol, and some one brings him the glad intelligence that the King has forgiven him on his promise of offending no more, will his gaoler, on the mere assertion of another, open those prison doors and set him free? We all know it is not so. Some one must bring the Queen's pardon, properly written out, and signed, and authenticated, every precaution being taken that it be exactly worded, and that there be no forgery or flaw in the document. When this is done, then that prison door is opened, and the prisoner is released from custody. Now God acts towards us, my

brethren, by His Own appointment, very much in the same way.

This is one special point of Church teaching, which is so often missed or forgotten. God has appointed certain *instruments*, or outward acts, as *times* and *proofs* of His forgiveness, and as *means* and *pledges* of our forgiveness by Him. There is this difference between Church and Bible teaching respecting the forgiveness of sins, and what we often hear or read from others around us in these days. In the first and that most important Christian sermon of all—S. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost—which added 3,000 souls to the number of believers, we read in Acts ii. 38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Again, in the case of S. Paul, after his miraculous conversion to Christianity, it was said to him by Ananias, who was sent to the Apostle by a vision from Heaven: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord." Here, then, is the first sure pledge and token of the forgiveness which God has given us, Christ has instituted in His Church. And therefore it is that we say, Sunday by Sunday, in the Nicene Creed, as one of the great fundamental truths of our religion: "I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins." Baptism is the first true pledge and token of every

one's forgiveness. Thus, both our Bible and our Prayer Book agree in connecting *the forgiveness of sins* with that initiatory sacrament of the gospel.

And could we only remain for ever after free from all sin, never liable to fall away, then our baptism by itself would continue in full force and be sufficient to bring us to eternal life, as it is declared to be in the case of infants dying. We require nothing more till we come to years of discretion, and are called upon to make our own public profession of faith in confirmation. But it is not the case with any of us that we go on in this perfect state of baptismal grace, as S. Paul uses the words of my text to prove to the Christians at Rome; we need continually fresh forgiveness at God's hands, because we continually sin and do amiss after Baptism; we trespass against God in thought, and word, and deed, and then have need to be forgiven of Him again and again. And what have we to plead *after* baptism for our forgiveness again and again? We come empty-handed, and have nothing to bring forward but the Sacrifice and Death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As often as we remind God of what He has done for us in the one special way He has ordained for us to do so; as often as we thus claim to ourselves the merits of Christ as belonging to us as we to Him, God forgives us anew. Our fresh sins are blotted out for His name's sake, we are restored again and again to what we were at first after our baptism.

Well, then, it is for this very end that our Saviour Himself, in the very night before He suffered for us, instituted that other great Sacrament of the Gospel which He has commanded us to celebrate again, and again, and again, until He come again. He Himself directly connects the forgiveness of sins with this divinely-ordained act of public worship; for He said at the moment of Institution, "This is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins.*" And S. Paul says: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." As often then as we fall into sin we need forgiveness, and we may have it. As often as the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are applied to the souls of the faithful in the Holy Sacrament of His body and blood, their sins are for His sake and merits forgiven. As often as we represent before God, Who is in Heaven, and thus remember ourselves on earth, the Death and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, God cannot withhold His forgiveness for repented sin, because for Christ's sake all sins of the penitent believer are *promised* eternal forgiveness. No time lessens the efficacy and merit of the blood of Jesus Christ. And thus through Christ, and Christ alone, comes true to us the blessedness of which my text speaks: "Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

SERMON VIII.

Benedicite Omnia Opera.

"The Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord. By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made; and all the Hosts of them by the Breath of His Mouth."—PSALM xxxiii. 5, 6.

THIS seems to be a psalm of praise to God, founded upon His Creation and Preservation; first, of the world in general; and secondly, of man in particular. We may well believe that the psalmist had under his eye at the moment the first chapter of our Bible, in which is related how God made all things in the beginning. And if we look at this psalm with this thought before our minds, we shall see how many references there seem to be in it to God's work of Creation, with expressions of a deeper understanding of the great work than others had possessed before David. Thus, to take the first words of my text, "The Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord:" it was out of the fulness of His love and goodness that God in the Beginning made this world, and all things in it, surrounding Himself with life in various forms and of various capacities, which *need* never have been. And when He looked down upon it before the work began, it was all "with-

out form, and void ; and darkness sat upon the face of the deep." Then, as this psalm expresses it in the 9th verse, "He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast." In six periods of time, which are each called "Days," but which may have been days of one thousand or of ten thousand *years* in length, as man reckons time; for "with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," God called into being, not only this solid earth on which we live, gathering it out of one universal sea, but all the things, living or inanimate, with which the earth and the sea abound now, finishing His work in the Creation of man "after His own image and likeness." And true it was "the earth was full of the goodness of the Lord;" for all things, as they came originally fresh from their Maker's hands, were pronounced by Him who is All-perfect to be "very good." We find it recorded five times over, "God saw that it was good;" and at the conclusion of all His work, after man's creation, it is once more repeated, "God saw *everything* that He had made, and, behold, it was *very* good." We must ever bear in mind that whatever evil exists in the world now—and we all know how many and great evils there are on every side of us—yet as God made all things in the Beginning there was nothing of all this. It was the introduction of sin into the world which marred the perfection of God's work. God's curse rested even upon the ground for man's sin. By sin man lost the perfect

image in himself of his Creator's mind and form, and he became corrupt, of the earth, earthy; liable to numberless pains, and evils, and sicknesses, and finally to death, as the sum and conclusion of all evil: "For God made not death in the Beginning;" but man brought it upon himself by the poison of sin, which he took into himself.

But even now, though we see not the world fresh and good as it came from its Maker's hands; so far from it, still how true is it that even now, "the earth is full," or even more full than it was at first, "of the goodness of the Lord." God's eye and hand are over us *for good* wherever we are and wherever we go. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good." Every blessing we enjoy, every alleviation of the sorrows and sufferings of the world, bright hopes and peaceful days, when they come—all are His free and undeserved gift and goodness towards us. Every danger we escape day by day is by His Care and Providence over us. If they were for a moment withdrawn from us, we might be scorched by unbearable rays of the Sun, or destroyed by a severity of cold, or drowned by a Flood of waters. The very changes which so commonly take place one day with another may at least remind us that at any moment cold or heat in excessive degrees might overtake us, were it not that "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." By night and by day, in summer and winter, He shields

us, guides us with His eye, strengthens our hands to work, and blesses our labours past and over, and in all ways and in all things never forgets us, because it is so true a fact that "the earth is *full* of the goodness of the Lord."

Let us look at the very next words which follow these: "By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made; and all the Hosts of them by the Breath (Spirit) of His mouth." We as Christians know who is specially denoted in Scripture by the title of "the Word." S. John begins his gospel by connecting the creation of the world with our Saviour—the Word of God: "In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.*" From this passage principally it is that those words are derived in our creed—the Nicene; relating *not* to the Father Almighty, as they are sometimes carelessly made to do, but to our Lord Jesus Christ, "by Whom all things were made, Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate." And so our creed agrees exactly with S. John's divinest words: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

* Gen. i. 1; S. John i. 1-3.

Thus S. John explains the psalm; and the psalm anticipates the declaration of S. John. And it is only by keeping clearly before our minds the glory and majesty of the Eternal Son that we can at all really or fully enter into the mystery, and love, and humiliation of the Incarnation. It is the very fact of His being the Creator of the world which makes His act of love towards us so supreme, so surpassing all that can be imagined. He who made all things in the Beginning became for us a creature of His own hands' making, clothed in man's nature like any one of us. He who was King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, became servant of all, "came" (as the apostle writes) "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." He "in whom is life, and the life was the light of men," underwent death, "that all men through Him might be saved." He to whom all creatures bow in Heaven and in earth, bowed His own head in death upon the Cross of shame, that we through Him might have the Kingdom of Heaven opened unto us. "By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made;" by the same Word was fallen man redeemed from guilt and sin, and restored to God's favour; as, or more than as, He was in the Beginning. Let us thankfully acknowledge *both* those stupendous acts of His goodness towards us; for thus above all ways is this "earth full of the goodness of the Lord." And it is by exalting the Everlasting Son that we shall best exalt, praise, and

adore the Everlasting Father of all; for He Himself says: "God hath committed all Judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father Which hath sent Him."

But this is not all that my text contains. There is really a mention in it of the Holy Trinity of Persons; for it adds, "And all the Hosts of them by the Breath (or Spirit) of His mouth." And in these words again we have a very clear reference to the first verses in Genesis. There we read, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Thus, as I said at first, there seems to be in this psalm not only a direct connection with the first chapter of our Bible, but a deeper understanding of the mystery of Creation by the Father, and the Word, or Son, and the Holy Ghost, than we should expect to find before the light of the gospel "showed to us things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world." All Creation is the work of the One true Almighty God; but each person in the Godhead bore His part in the great and marvellous work; and so again in the next great, or still greater work, the Redemption of man. Of all that exists in Creation, man alone has the full benefit and blessing of all that exists. All things were made for our sakes. All things in some way minister to man's use or necessities, or happiness or probation. All things were given into his hands, alike the corn and fruits of the earth which

sustain our life, the cattle which live and work for the service of men, "the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas." All these in one way or other are of service to mankind, and are intended to minister to God's glory, and to our natural or spiritual good and probation. Thus it is that our Hymn which we occasionally use calls upon all things, animate or inanimate alike, to minister to God's glory, and to show forth the praises of Him Who has made, created, and ordained them. "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." It calls first upon things in the Heavens—Angels, the heavens, waters above the firmament, powers of the Lord, Sun and Moon and Stars; then on inanimate nature below—showers and dew, winds, fire and heat, winter and summer, dews and frosts, ice and snow, nights and days; then on things on and in the earth; and lastly, to man in his various forms and capacities, inviting all in their several ways and stations and office in this world to minister to the praise of Him Who created them, and to magnify Him above all things. And thus, my brethren, as we began, so we may well end our thoughts with these blessed words of the psalm we are considering to-day, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Even where sin has marred and spoilt the original beauty and perfection of God's new and perfect work, even there, through His Spirit, has He made in many

ways a means of subduing or lessening the evils of life. To us Christians He has given this distinguishing mark by which all men may know that we are His, that we have love one towards another. Twice or three times over, in nearly similar terms, we are told that the first and great commandment of all is, that we love the Lord our God above all else; and the second is like unto it—that we love one another—love our neighbour as ourselves.

By this law of Christian love, thus propounded, God has made a way for most evils in life to be checked and subdued, if they cannot entirely be got rid of. Evils are least where love is most. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Love "thinketh no evil: rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." If our love were perfect, there would be few sorrows compared to the many that abound. The Church of these latter days would be like the infant Church when first the Spirit of love from above was poured upon the Apostles. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart." The largeness of the gift of the Spirit subdued the natural selfishness of all on whom His influence fell. This is the best gift of all for us to strive after, and seek to excel in. It makes us like unto God. Few evils in life can for long resist the influence of true Christian love. Where it is found, it is the greatest and best proof of all of what my text declares, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

SERMON IX.

Angel Ministers.

"The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."—PSALM xxxiv. 7.

IN this psalm there are two chief subjects, one of praise to God, and the other of instruction to ourselves. It celebrates God's goodness to man; but it sets forth in one way or other the *terms* or *conditions* on which that Goodness is shown towards any one. It will be sufficient if to-day we confine our thoughts to the first of these two subjects, God's goodness to man; and especially that great and blessed truth contained in this one verse of my text, "The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." I believe that very few Christian people in our day think very much about the holy Angels, and their office and work towards us. We all indeed say repeatedly, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven;" but perhaps most of us seldom if ever bestow one thought upon those to whom these words allude, as doing God's will *so perfectly*, that we desire for ourselves that we could but do the same. Few of us, I am sure, realize to ourselves that the heavens above are full of heavenly beings, in seven or nine ranks or orders, who are for

ever employed in His praise, or in His service to usward. But not Heaven only, but earth also, is full of God's messengers; for S. Paul says of the Angels, "Are they not *all* ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" and so great is their number that our Lord said, at one word from Him twelve legions of angels would have been in a moment at His side. Of all truths set before us in our Bible, from its very beginning to its end, there is scarcely one so often named in one way or other as the service of Angels; and yet, for some reason, in these days there is no truth so forgotten amongst us. Yet we find the mention of Angels from first to last, from Genesis to the Revelation of S. John the Divine. We speak and think of God's acting towards us directly, not through the instrumentality of others; but our Bible teaches exactly the reverse. It would be endless to cite every passage in which God's Angels are described to us as sent forth for the protection or the punishment of men like ourselves. It is a very blessed truth which my text expresses, "The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." And so our Prayer Book on one day in the year, which is just now approaching, puts into our mouths a collect, which I should be sorry to pass any one day in the year without repeating, "O everlasting God, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order; mercifully grant, that as Thy holy

Angels always do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth." Surely, brethren, it is very strange that we should all believe, as we do, in the presence of *evil* spirits, tempting men to sin, leading them on to transgress God's laws, and to hurt one another, and lose their own souls, acting under one supreme Head, who was once a bright angel in Heaven, but is now a fallen angel; and yet that we should scarcely if ever think of the opposite, most blessed and comforting truth, that the *good* Angels of God are as eager, as ready, as earnest, as continually present to help and to defend every one of us, to shield us from harm, and to lead us into all good. In this way we think of Satan rather as the *equal* of God than as one with whom an Archangel has contended, and, we may assume, successfully.

I said just now, we find mention of the Angels from the beginning to the close of our Bible. The chapters are but few before we come to the history of Abraham, and there we find the history of angel ministry to begin. What a wonderful description is that of the three Angels talking with Abraham over the destruction of Sodom, and Abraham's intercession with the one and three; a chapter read always on Trinity Sunday, evidently from the singular change from three to one, from the plural to the singular, and then the reverse, which pervades the *whole* discourse. Is it not one of the ways in which Abraham saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced to see it,

and was glad? Then immediately we read how the Angels rescued Lot and his daughters from the guilty city, which was immediately destroyed by a rain of fire and brimstone from Heaven; then we have in Abraham's grandson's youthful days that wonderful vision at Bethel, when Jacob saw a ladder set up on earth and reaching to Heaven, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon it, as though the words of faithful Abraham had descended from the father to the son, "The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His Angel with thee, and prosper thy way." *

Later than this, when we come to the time of Moses, we find continual reference to the Angels of God. Have we practically forgotten the origin of the Passover, when God sent forth a destroying Angel through the land of Egypt, and cut off in one night the first-born in every house throughout the land? Was it not a promise from God Himself to Israel, by Moses, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for My Name is in him"? and again, "For Mine Angel shall go before thee." † And when we mention Moses, we should not forget that remarkable passage in the epistle of S. Jude, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not

* Gen. xxiv. 40.

† Exod. xxiii.

bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." It is a passage which has a mysterious reference surely to that ministry of angels referred to in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where the soul of Lazarus is transported by the angels to that place of bliss there called "Abraham's bosom." Afterwards we have that appearance of an Angel to Manoah, foretelling the birth of Samson, the deliverer of Israel. In David's time we read of the Angel destroying seventy thousand men in Israel, and showing himself to David at the threshing-floor of Araunah. Then in Hezekiah's day an Angel smote in one night an hundred and fourscore and five thousand Assyrians who were besieging Jerusalem. In the book of Daniel we have my text twice fulfilled; for there we read how the three young men who feared God, and were cast into the furnace of fire because they would not worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, were saved by an Angel; and afterwards, when Daniel was cast into the lions' den, he says, "God hath sent His Angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths."

And when we turn, my brethren, from the Old Testament to those later books, which are the last revelation made by God to man, in them we find a perpetual reference to the holy angels, and their work among men. As Christ Himself was both perfect God and perfect Man in our form and nature, so to Him, as one of us, the Angels are represented as continually waiting to minister to Him.

Thus it was an Angel's voice which foretold the birth of S. John the Baptist, our Lord's forerunner. It was an Angel who made known to the blessed Virgin Mary the part she was so wonderfully to bear in God's scheme for the redemption of the world by her becoming the mother of our Lord. It was an angel who announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem that Christ was born ; and it was a multitude of the heavenly Host who sang that Christmas hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." It was by the word of an Angel that Joseph fled into Egypt with the infant Saviour and His mother, and so preserved Him from Herod's cruel sword, which slew, it is said, fourteen thousand children in Bethlehem and its coasts. After this we read how the Angels came and ministered unto our Lord in the wilderness, when Satan left Him ; and when His hour was near, an Angel appeared to Him in Gethsemane, strengthening Him for what He had to endure. By the tomb Angels watched ; and on Easter-morn, first one and then two Angels appeared in shining garments at the open grave. At the ascension two Angels told to the apostles thus : "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And so, my brethren, as it was thus with our Lord from first to last, so we believe that in like manner the holy Angels are sent by God to watch over every one of us, just as they watched over and ministered to Christ

in His life in this world. Is not this a certain and most blessed truth for us to realize—"The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them"? It may be, that as resistance to temptation drives Satan away, so sin drives further off from us the watch and care of the holy Angels. Certainly it is God's design that they *should* watch over *every one of us*; for our Lord says, "Take heed that ye despise *not one* of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in Heaven their Angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in heaven." We have seen in the case of Lazarus how they assist at every good man's death. We know also how they will appear at the last day, and at the judgment-seat of Christ; for it will be, we are told, the trumpet of the Archangel that will awake and raise the dead; and after that, says our Lord, "the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the Harvest is the end of the world; *and the reapers are the Angels*. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

To apply these thoughts for a moment still more immediately to ourselves, with the remembrance of the feast of S. Michael now near at hand, let us not, my

Christian brethren, live as though we were of the same mind with the Sadducees of old. Of them we are told that they denied that there was any resurrection, either angel or spirit; but let us thankfully acknowledge the goodness of God in sending His Angels to watch over every one of us, if we believe in and love and fear Him. My text tells us this; so does S. Paul, equally distinctly. If we love God, we are never alone. When Elisha, the man of God, was surrounded on all sides by enemies, God opened the eyes of His servant, and he saw how the whole mountain was full of horses and chariots round about the prophet. So with us; God protects, and watches over, and cares for us, by sending certain holy Angels to guard and keep us in all our ways. Let us try to remember that we are never alone. Like Jacob in the solitary wilderness, there is for us a ladder set up from earth to Heaven, with Angels on it ascending with our prayers to Heaven, descending with God's blessing and goodness to us. We are not unmindful of all this in our highest act of Christian worship; for we there use this hymn: "Therefore with Angels, and Archangels, and all the Host of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." Let us rejoice in the assurance of my text, "The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them;" as it was said of and to our Lord, "He shall give His Angels charge over Thee to help Thee in all Thy ways, that Thou dash not Thy foot against a stone."

SERMON X.

Sins of the Tongue.

"Come, ye children, and hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips, that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good: seek peace, and ensue it. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers."—PSALM xxxiv. 11-16.

THE two principal parts of this psalm are those verses of it which commemorate God's goodness to man, and those which contain those fixed and certain *conditions* on which this goodness of God towards us altogether depends. Thus these verses of my text to-day set forth the terms on which God's goodness to us rests. And not only their *meaning*, but the *very* words themselves, are confirmed to us in the most express manner, for they are repeated word for word by S. Peter in his first epistle. He says, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see

good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." * Thus we have in this passage the very words of this psalm adopted by S. Peter, as his special admonition to Christians of all times and lands. But this first precept in my text, that respecting the governance of the tongue, is only one out of very many places in our Bible where this same truth is taught us. Some people think to themselves, what can it matter what a man utters through his lips; our words pass into the air, and are heard only for a moment, and then the sound of them, and it may be the memory of them too, dies away altogether. And so it often is, brethren, that no one remembers in a little time what he may have heard us say. Many words spoken leave no trace behind them beyond the moment. They are like the passage of a bird through the air, or as an arrow, which leaves no mark behind it; or like a ship's track in the sea, which immediately flows and reflows just as before. But though it may be sometimes thus as regards our words on earth, it is not so in God's sight. He remembers exactly all we ever say or think; and so our Lord says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be con-

* 1 S. Peter iii. 8-12

demned ;" as though *all* depended upon this one feature in man's probation. S. James is remarkably strong in his expressions upon this head. In one place he says, "If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body ;" and in another place, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." The reason of all this stress, which is so often laid upon the difficulty and necessity of governing the tongue, lies probably in this fact, which our Saviour declares to us in plain terms, that the tongue is a very sure and exact indicator of the state of a man's heart. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things : *for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*"

It is with our tongue just what the common and well-known proverb expresses, "A feather shows which way the wind blows ;" its very lightness indicates the direction of the current of air which would not be done by any heavier substance. I am sure we can know but very little indeed of ourselves without finding out how much care and attention we need give to our lips ; as the psalmist says elsewhere of himself, "I will take heed unto my ways, that I offend not in my tongue. I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly is in my sight." If we keep watch but a short

time, we shall soon find out how continually we are liable to transgress in one way or other with our tongue; how many sinful, or idle, or useless words we utter, or it may be words tempting others into sin, and encouraging them in wickedness, if they are not sometimes even worse than that; for they may be defiling, polluting, or blasphemous. Not that we are each under the *same* sort of temptation to sin with our lips; for our temptations vary in this as in every other direction. Thus what a multitude of words, useless at best, or idle, gossiping words, flow from the lips of some; yet our Lord says, "Verily, I say unto you, That for *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Or what a multitude of remarks go forth from us, reflecting upon others in one way or other, judging and condemning one another without let or scruple. How common is fault-finding with our neighbours, which is usually in proportion to the *absence* of all fault-finding with *ourselves*. What suspicions are expressed of other men's motives and conduct; what a sea of troubles do we often stir up for ourselves by this class of sins of the tongue. Our Lord lays down this rule: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." And S. Paul describes that charity which most of all makes us in any measure like unto God, and fit to live with Him in heaven, thus: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not

itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." What a much happier world would this be if all could thus govern their tongues; if we would all endeavour to believe only what is good of others, till we can believe so no longer; if we would never be hasty in our opinions, and suspicions, and judgments of one another, but for love's sake "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things."

Then again there is another class of sins of the tongue, those hasty and intemperate words which express our ill-will or anger, and stir up such feelings in others. The wise man says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" but it is a trial sometimes to follow out so wise a rule. Some of us have, as we know, a great tendency in us to give way to temper, and to resent the least word of affront, fancied or real, and to return railing for railing, or worse. And, once more, besides these there is the insincere talker about God, or his religious feelings and aspirations, and so forth. This is a real danger with some persons. The whole religion of some persons begins and ends in what they say. They are like the fig-tree to which our Lord approached, and found on it "leaves only, and no fruit." It is very easy, brethren, for us in one way or other to break the third commandment, and yet to be altogether unaware that we are doing so. The breach of that com-

mandment does not lie only in taking a false oath, or in calling God to witness on every light occasion. I am convinced that some persons, innocently at first, form a habit of religious talk when the time or place is unsuitable, and the very words are useless and unmeaning. Deep rivers for the most part run smoothly and grandly. It is the shallow little stream which gurgles over every stone which lies in its course. The more talk there is of religion, the more need is there of *heartly service* done to Christ. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do* not the things which I say unto you?" is a reproof from His own lips. It is good to talk sometimes, and on all suitable occasions, of God, and the things of God, and especially to speak out for Christ, and not be ashamed to confess Him before men when some Christian precept or moral is called in question, and we or others may be tempted to hide our light under a bushel, and to follow the multitude to do evil. Christ has promised, that if we confess Him before men, He will confess us before God and the holy angels; but that if we deny or are ashamed of Him, He will deny us at the moment of our greatest need. And it is well for us, at least at times, to fix our minds upon *one* subject more especially, rather than upon several. He who attempts everything, fails in most.

The knowledge of the heart is really as great a science, and as difficult to master, as it is for a man to be eminent in any one special line of study or know-

ledge which they chalk out for themselves. It is thus in all these ways a very wise admonition addressed to us in these words: "Come, ye children, and hearken unto Me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that lusteth to live: and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil: and thy lips, that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good: seek peace, and ensue it." This implies not merely the avoidance of what is evil, but supplying the place of evil by what is good; it is not merely forsaking the service of Satan, but giving ourselves up to the service of Christ. We all must remember the description, in the parable, of the heart, out of which evil has been driven, but being left "*empty, swept, and garnished,*" it becomes once more the abode of evil in sevenfold force, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first." Just as it is of little good to clear and clean a field or garden of all weeds and rubbish, if we stop there and let the land lie fallow and unused, and so ready and sure to abound very shortly in weeds and thistles and nettles, which are indigenous to most soils in most places. We should try to make our conversation in some way "to minister grace unto the hearers." Some people's lightest word is of great weight and importance to others. How often do we have said to us, "Sir, I remember what you told me, or what you said on such and such an occasion"—it may be years ago. Though so many words pass away, and are forgotten, others are carried, like thistle-

down, beyond the place where they fall, and there take root, and spread, and grow. And if we try to guard our tongues from evil, and to employ them so far as we can, without constraint and without hypocrisy, in God's service, it is a true term which the psalmist uses when he calls the tongue the best member of the body. "O God," he says in the 108th Psalm, "my heart is ready, my heart is ready : I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have. I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people : I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is greater than the heavens : and Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." So again in the 92nd Psalm : "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord : and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most Highest ; to tell of Thy loving-kindness early in the morning, and of Thy truth in the night-season. For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works : and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operations of Thy hands." How I wish we would all try to do this when we meet together in the public services of the Church. Our form of worship is our "Common Prayer," a great portion of which should be repeated aloud by *every one* of us, both for *his own* sake and for his *neighbour's* sake too. S. Paul tells us of the custom in his day of repeating the "Amen" at the Eucharistic service—"Thy thanksgiving"—and how an unbeliever coming in and being present at a hearty, responsive Christian service, conducted reverently,

earnestly, and devoutly, may be won to the faith, and "falling down on his face, worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." Any how, let us remember this, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous : and His ears are open unto their prayers," through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XI.

Blessings not thought of.

"Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of all. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken."

PSALM xxxiv. 19, 20.

WE have already considered the earlier verses of this 34th Psalm: first as it describes God's watchful care over His own people, especially by the unseen agency of the holy angels, who are God's ministers and messengers towards us on earth; for this Psalm says: "The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them;" and S. Paul says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But then, as I said, all this love and care on God's part towards us is conditional, and is proportionated to our love and obedience to Him. As it is said in this psalm: "What man is he that lusteth to live: and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil: and thy lips, that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good: seek peace, and ensue it."

But some of us might say or think, that if all this care and providence of God and of the angels for us is

over the *souls* of men, the body is nothing. Some persons altogether depreciate the importance of the body as compared with the soul. Yet in this life our bodies, S. Paul tells us, are "the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you," and both are to live for ever and ever at their reunion and resurrection. So my text says: "Great are the troubles of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of all. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken."

Of this last fact we have a most remarkable and especially-recorded proof in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; so that we may be sure that this verse has a special reference to Him. You may remember perhaps how, in the institution of the passover, as described in Exodus xii., it was ordered to each Israelite to kill and eat the paschal lamb; and amongst the express rules by which it was to be observed was this one, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

The whole institution—as indeed was every sacrifice of every kind—was intended to represent and prefigure the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, "that taketh away the sins of the world." And so we read in S. John's gospel, in the very next verse to that in which the evangelist describes the death of our Saviour on His cross, thus: "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-

day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken.* This is one of those wonderful *references*, which occur as it were accidentally in the Psalms, to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as in the 22nd Psalm we have the actual *crucifixion* described in the words: "They pierced my hands and my feet." But it shows, my brethren, how God can and will deliver His own people as He sees fit.

How often are these very words fulfilled to thousands of us who so constantly travel from one place to another without accident or injury! and to how many in every railway accident that *does* happen, yet somehow they marvellously escape. "He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken." But amid the multitude of evils and sorrows that there are in the world, men's hearts sometimes sink within them, and they begin to doubt and question perhaps God's special love, and care, and providence over each and all of His works. And so it is good for us to go back to such a passage as this, and to read once more David's declaration in my text,

* S. John xix. 31-36.

after all the vicissitudes of this life, throughout all of which God had preserved and rescued Him, that though the troubles of the righteous may be, as they often are, great and hard to bear, yet that in due time the Lord delivereth him out of all, that "He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken." It is the inevitable lot of all of us, sooner or later, that troubles and sorrows should surround us in this sinful world. Had man never fallen, then we believe that nothing of the kind would ever have been known; and it is one of the most blessed consolations of our faith, that in the life beyond the grave this primeval law of pure and uninterrupted joy will be revived; that as sin will be banished, so all that sin is the cause of will disappear; and all that now vexes, or harasses, or pains us, will be at an end in God's kingdom, for He will "wipe away every tear from every eye."

And this will be very soon; for "man's life passeth away like a shadow." Still, though it be true, *as it is*, that none of us escape for very long the sentence passed upon our race at its very fountain-head, yet that tribulation—God's sifting, as it truly is, when it overtakes us—tends to our greater perfection and to our greater fitness to enjoy God's eternal kingdom. So much so, that the minister of Christ is taught to say by every sick man's bedside, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and

scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;" words which have been repeated in each generation for now three thousand years with untold comfort to the sufferer. And so S. Paul says of his own life of suffering: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If we look back to the old histories of all the great and good men of former times, we find that all have had to undergo this one *law* of man's probation. Beginning with Abel, who fell by his brother's hand; and Noah, who for one hundred and twenty years bore with the taunts and provocations of his own godless generation; so Abraham had early in life to leave his father's house, and to emigrate into a far distant and unknown land, and late in life to take his son, his only son, and to offer him up as a sacrifice on the same Mount which fifteen hundred years afterwards bore the Cross; so Joseph was sold by his own brethren as a slave boy to the people of a strange land, then cruelly imprisoned on a false accusation, but in the end became ruler over all the land of Egypt; so was it with David and Elijah, and with Isaiah, who was sawn asunder, and with Jeremiah, who was cast into the dungeon well, and Daniel, who was cast into the den of lions; so that our Lord says to the Jews of His time, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" Yet out of all troubles God in *some* way delivereth them that are His; as to S. Stephen is mani-

fested a vision of heaven, which more than compensated for the momentary suffering he had to endure.

It is a great thing, my brethren, for all of us not only to hold ourselves ready and prepared for trials in life, but to determine with ourselves *beforehand* that we will try and see in all that befalls us, whatever it be, God's love and God's goodness, that so His "strength may be made perfect in our weakness." How often have we to witness some poor man laid low on a bed of sickness; and taken out of all his work in life, he becomes, and feels himself to be, a burden to others, instead of being, as he has been, a help and stay to all around him; but how often do we find that God works wonderfully in and for him through this very misfortune and trouble which has overtaken him? He learns to be content, and to resign himself wholly into God's hands, that God's will may be done in him as never before; or, as I have had said to me, "When I feel worst, then it is that I feel happiest."

Is it not a good thing for us all thus to benefit by and to use aright our troubles when they come upon us? and it is good also to look forward, not despondingly, but faithfully and hopefully, to the expectation of their coming, and of their use and benefit to all who meet them and submit to them in a right spirit. Let us all be thankful, deeply thankful, to God for all the blessings which we every day enjoy; for all the good with which we are continually surrounded in this land, and in our

own homes ; but let us remember that these things are not our own, not our rightful possession, not a permanent inheritance to any of us in this life. We must expect dark and rainy days in this life, as well as the bright sunshine of God's favour ; but the more we prepare ourselves to view these things aright, the less *cause* is there that God should send upon us those greater and long-continued trials which we sometimes see in families or in individual cases around us—"sorrow upon sorrow." Still, brethren, trial of some kind, sooner or later, is sure to come upon each of us ; and so it is good for us to bear in mind beforehand these consoling words of my text, though "the troubles of the righteous are great ; yet the Lord delivereth him out of all. He keepeth all his bones, so that not one of them is broken."

One or two thoughts result from these. First, let us always try to look on the bright side of things. It is a great proof of our trust in and love to God when we are able to say and feel, whatever happens, "All is for the best : Thy will be done." God loves us, we are sure, too much to send a feather's weight of trouble upon any of us more than is good for us. Nay, is it not rather that we often feel and think how much less of this we have, and how many more blessings we enjoy, than we do in any way deserve ? "As a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him." He bears long with us, and ever deals gently, wisely, and forbearingly

with us ; not letting us forget and despise him, as we might do, nor leaving us to follow unchecked our own ways and wishes in all things.

And next let us rest our hearts upon the assurance of God's care for us *individually*. He remembers our name, and deals with us one by one, as He sees is best for each. Sin makes men feel and think of themselves only as a class, as a crowd, as an association. The *individuality* of each of us in God's sight is a burden and check in the path of sin ; but grace teaches us more and more to know ourselves even as we are known of God. Born one by one, living our own individual life in this world, dying alone, hereafter to hear our name separately called before the judgment-seat of the righteous Judge of all, "that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This, brethren, is a great comfort and stay to godly people. It is a great comfort to feel that God does not merely keep a *general* knowledge of the world, and a superficial superintendence over it and us, but that He knows and remembers *each one* of us separately, however humble or however high we may be ; however well or little known by circumstances or character, or age or appearance ; that there is not a word in our mouth, nor a thought in our heart, but all is known unto Him, "in Whom we each live, and move, and have our being." True, He loves us, we are sure, more than we can ever love Him ; and

loves us more as we love Him more; giving us more than ever we desire or deserve; blessing us abundantly as we grow in humility, in patience, in likeness to Christ; and as we bring forth more and more the fruits of the Spirit, the more we do as the psalmist says, "Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good." And though at times, to some of us, and at some period sooner or later to *all* of us, it is true in every one of us, as my text says, that "great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of all. He keepeth all his bones: so that not one of them is broken." "Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall ever give thee thy heart's desire."

SERMON XII.

Unseen Friends made unseen Enemies.

"Let them be as the dust before the wind: and the Angel of the Lord scattering them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the Angel of the Lord persecute them."—PSALM xxxv. 5, 6.

IN the references in the margin of our Bibles, this psalm is directly connected with 1 Samuel xxiv. In the fifteenth verse of that chapter we find the very words with which this psalm begins. "*Plead Thou my cause, O Lord,*" says the psalm, "with them that strive with me: and fight Thou against them that fight against me." In that passage I have named are these words: "The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee (Saul), and see, and *plead my cause*, and deliver me out of thine hand," but it would be impossible to say only from this, that that event in the life of Saul and David, when they had met in the cave at Engedi, was the occasion of this psalm; still there is the probability that it was so, from this coincidence of words.

Later down we come to expressions very clearly applicable to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His hour of trial, when we read, "False witnesses did rise up:

they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good, to the great discomfort of my soul. Nevertheless, when they were sick, I put on sackcloth, and humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer shall turn into mine own bosom." It seems hardly necessary to point out the immediate connection which subsists between this passage, and the false witnesses suborned by the Jewish priests and the council to give evidence, which might lead to our Lord's condemnation. "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought for false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

One question which does arise in connection with this psalm and others, especially the 7th, 69th, and the 109th Psalms, is, How are we to understand and to use, as Christians, those fierce imprecations of evil, trouble, and death, which these psalms contain?

Now the readiest answer to any question or doubt of the kind is to know and to remember, that the same tense in the Hebrew which may be translated in an imperative sense, such as my text, "*Let* the angel of the Lord scatter them; *let* the angel of the Lord persecute them," and so forth, may equally well be translated in a *future* sense; and then these sentences, which stand as a *prayer* in our version of these psalms, become

rather a *prophecy*, or declaration of what the consequences of sin will be. There is, of course, a very great difference between much of the Old Testament and the New in their scope and spirit, because God's love to man was not known or revealed before the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as it is in and by Him. If we but remember this, the difficulty we might reasonably feel on this head vanishes; for instead of saying, "*Let his days be few: and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless: and his wife a widow,*"* &c., we are merely asserting the fact that such *will be*, as such *was* the case with Judas, and with those who sin in any way as Judas did.

With these preliminary remarks upon this psalm, let us turn more especially to the words from it in my text, "Let them be as the dust before the wind: and the angel of the Lord scattering them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them." Is not this exactly the reverse of that one verse in the last psalm, "The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them"? But such is the exact *truth* respecting the angels, as it is exhibited in God's word. In the very same chapter, *e.g.*, we read of S. Peter's deliverance from prison by the Angel, who appeared to him at midnight, and loosed him from his chains, and led him out through the open doors and the streets of Jerusalem till

* Psalm cix. 7, 8.

he stood before the door of Mark, in whose house many were gathered together praying for that very event—the apostle's deliverance, which his appearance announced as an accomplished fact. But then, before that chapter closes, we are told how *the* angel of the Lord (apparently the *same* angel as had delivered S. Peter), smote Herod, "that he was eaten of worms, and died." Thus S. Peter's case illustrates the truth of the last psalm respecting the angels, while Herod's case illustrates exactly what is said in my text; and so, no doubt, it is in every generation of men. What is the savour of life unto life in one, is the savour of death unto death in another. The very stimulant which might save a strong man, would be death to another in cases of fever or inflammation. Was it not so in the great deliverance of Israel out of Egypt? The angel *saved* them, but *destroyed* the first-born in every house throughout all the land. The pillar of a cloud was to Israel a light by night, and a shadow from the scorching rays of the eastern sun; but to the Egyptians it was exactly the reverse—scorching them by day, and shrouding them in darkness by night. So it is ever. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see the means, or the reasons of many things which happen amongst us; one man saved, but many lost; some terrible disaster occurs, and while many are killed or maimed for life, somehow one or another, as if by miracle, escapes unhurt; it is hard to say how or why. And in our

Lord's own explanation of His parable of the tares and the wheat, He tells us how the angels will be employed at the last day, not only gathering in the saved so that none shall be lost, but also gathering together the wicked out of His kingdom for their last and never-ending destruction. "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Thus our Lord Himself describes to us the office of the holy angels, as fulfilling both duties assigned to them in this psalm and the last, guarding and guiding the holy and faithful, scattering and persecuting the wicked, even to the last hour of their companionship with the good.

But such is almost an invariable rule with all holy things, according as they are used or abused. If they are not the savour of life unto life, then they are made the savour of death unto death. If they do not make us holier and better, they work in us the very opposite effect, and what was ordained for life is found to be unto death. Men will be judged according to their privileges, and the use they have made of them, of whatever nature the gift be. "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" burst forth the sad expression from the all-holy lips; "for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been

done in Tyre and Sidon, they would a great while ago have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." The same Almighty God, who is our Father, Preserver, and Giver of all good, is a jealous God, and says of Himself, "Vengeance is mine; and I will repay." Yea, saith our Lord, "fear Him, who *after* He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." The very same lips which will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," will say also, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We can never be as those who have never known God, or been taught His will, and their consequent duty. "That shall not be," said the prophet to Israel, "which cometh into your mind, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as they that know not God." Every gift of grace or providence to soul or body should be remembered by us, and minister to our further growth in grace here, and our fitness for heaven hereafter.

Would that we all would see and remember this while we may! The day will come when all must be accounted for; and then, if the angels have not tarried around us and delivered us, they or others will be there to scatter and persecute us; for "God will render to every man according to his deeds: eternal life to all

who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." How shortsighted most of us are in this world not to see these things in their right light. How blessed to feel that we have unseen friends always at hand, leading us, if we will but be led, along the strait and narrow way of life, ever at our side "to keep us in all our ways." How sad to turn these friends into enemies; to make our guides and preservers to become our persecutors; scattering like dust before the wind those who refuse to be gathered in and brought safe home at last. I am sure it is a great point for us all to realize, far more than we do now, what is told us of the spiritual world around us in which we live. Angels our friends, or turned to be our enemies through our own wilfulness and fault; and at the same time a host of evil spirits, acting under one subtle head, always actively engaged in their rebellious work of turning them from light to darkness, alienating his best powers and nature from God, that he may at last, and only too successfully, claim all he can to share in his own everlasting condemnation in the lake of fire. The day will come when all who live in sin will call, but in vain, on the hills to cover them, and on the

mountains to fall on them. They will be "scattered as dust before the wind" down their dark and slippery way, while angels pursue them. We have all good need to pray: "In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us."

SERMON XIII.

The Fountain of Life.

"For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light."

PSALM xxxvi. 9.

THE whole of this psalm consists of a contrast between the greatness and goodness of God, compared with the littleness and folly of sinful men. There are very grand expressions of God's greatness and goodness in this psalm; such as these: "Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens; and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds. Thy righteousness standeth like the strong mountains: Thy judgments are like the great deep. Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast; how excellent is Thy mercy, O God: and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." "For with Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light." A living author says on this verse: "These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of S. John."*

Now it is a very obvious and plain truth which these

* Dr. Perowne.

few last words contain, if we think about them ; but probably many of us have often heard and read them without thinking much what their meaning is. "For with Thee is the well (or fountain) of life." It is a direct acknowledgment that God is the Author and Giver of all that we call "life" in this world. His life-giving power pervades all things in the world. He is their well or fountain. Thus in the beginning, we are told, God "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul;" and thus life in all of us is a gift of His own essence, the true properties of which we can never really understand in this world. Life from God pervades everything. It is not only we—mankind—who have our life and being from God—so that as our Lord replied to Satan's first suggestion of evil, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"—but it is equally so with all else around us. The beasts, both small and great, which abound in all lands, and all little insects and creeping things which live and multiply innumera- bly and unfailingly, "the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the seas"—all these have their life given them by God, preserved to them by God, and taken away from them by God when He sees fit. "Consider the fowls of the air," said our Lord ; "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." And

it is only by His direct knowledge and permission that they die; for our Lord says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

And so, if we go still lower down in nature, it is God who breathes upon all inanimate nature the breath of life, making the trees to grow, and "the grass upon the mountains, and green herb for the service of men;" "visiting the earth, and blessing it: making it very plenteous. Thou waterest her furrows, thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof: Thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it. Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy clouds drop fatness." Thus it is that God is in every way, and to everything, "the well of life;" in whom alone we all do "live, and move, and have our being."

But with us, brethren, men upon earth, there are, it may be said, three great divisions of life—each altogether different from the other—each of which may rightly be called by itself "life," and of each God is "the well or fountain."

First, there is the life *natural*, that being of which all human nature alike partakes by being born into this world. There is no difference in this respect between Christians and those who are not Christians. Almighty God is the well of life to all mankind alike. He is the

one universal Father of all. He hath made of one blood all nations upon earth. In this way with Him there is no respect of persons or nations. All alike, too, are born under the curse of sin ; so that He can have mercy upon all through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And in Him begins the next great stage or division of man's life ; viz., the life *spiritual*—man's regeneration—that recreation and restoration in us of the image of Him which was lost to us in the beginning, but is recovered to be ours in the Church of Christ. This is a life beyond, above, beside, additional to, and higher and better than the natural life. And as God the Father is the prime Author and Giver of the latter, so this new life is more especially in each of us the work of the Holy Ghost, "the Lord and Giver of life." It is this gift of spiritual life, endowing us with power against and over sin, which explains to us those words at the last supper—"It is expedient for you *that* I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." It is the special office and work of the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ to begin, to sustain, and to perfect more and more this new and spiritual life in God's people ; as our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again" (or from above) "of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Herein lies the great distinction between Christian

people and those who are not Christian. And yet, strange to say, it is a difference which, though so great, we can never discern by the outward eye alone. I mean that if we meet a friend or stranger on the road, we cannot tell in any degree whether this change, great and all-important as it is, has taken place in him or not; for it is altogether a *spiritual* change, and nothing that is spiritual can be seen or handled. And thus it is that so many disbelieve and reject this great fact of Christianity, either in part or altogether. It is a truth and fact presented only to our *faith*. We cannot look into another man's heart, and see the work of the Spirit there with our bodily eyes. If on better acquaintance we are assured that that work *is* done in him, still what we even then see and remark is not the change and work itself, but only the fruit and effect of that work and change. Just so we see not in the joyous spring-time of each year the rise and spread of the sap from the root through every branch and twig of the tree, but we see the certain proof of its circulation in the new life of green leaves and fresh shoots, and it may be of sweet and lovely flowers, which the tree puts forth from this inward process of its own. So with ourselves, brethren. Besides the *natural* life, of which God our Almighty Father is the Author, there is begun in each of us, if we are Christ's, a life of the Spirit, and from the Spirit; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

And this life, like our natural life, has in it all the properties of growth and increase. The gift of the Spirit is not once and for ever the same, but demands of us for itself that we obtain of it more and more; adding grace unto grace; adding by it, as S. Peter says, "to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

And thus, my brethren, we come to the third division of life, of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the special Author and Giver—"the well of life" to us. As God the Father is the Giver of our *natural* life, as God the Holy Ghost is the Author and Giver of our *spiritual* life, so, if these go on parallel to one another, they issue eventually in a third manifestation of life, which is far higher and better, which we call the-resurrection life, or life eternal—the life beyond the grave, which will never end. Of this our Lord spake when He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." And again, when He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." And so S. Paul says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Thus then we come to the third and grandest way of all in which it is true to us,

if we are Christ's true sons, "With Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light." For "the life was the light of men." * Here are three distinct phases of life, each the special and distinct work in some measure, so far as we know, of one person in the one Godhead—the Father, who gives us and everything life natural, common to all alike, common to good and bad, common to white man and negro, common to Christians and to heathen, and extending itself to all that we call inanimate nature, the trees and plants which abound on earth.

Next there is the life *spiritual*, which it is the special office of the Holy Ghost, "the Lord and Giver of life," to bestow on us. This is a stream of life running parallel with all our being in this world, if we be God's faithful people; growing in us as it grows and advances, but so far unlike it that, instead of wearing out, it becomes in all them that are saved more and more perfect, more beautiful, more powerful, as we day by day draw nearer to our great and last change. And then, thirdly, that great change begins a new state and condition of life in them that are Christ's—a life hidden indeed and secret for a period after the strife of this world is past and over, so that it is often described to us as a period of rest and sleep. "There remaineth therefore a *rest* to the people of God." "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." "Sorrow not,

* S. John i. 4.

even as others, for them that *sleep* in Jesus." But when the hour shall have come that body and soul are to be reunited in each of us, then our resurrection-life, begun in us through our oneness with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on earth, will be a life for evermore. As David says, in the twenty-first Psalm, we may remember, "He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

And so in each and all of these ways, taken together or taken separately, it is true, "With Thee is the well of life: and in Thy light shall we see light." The great and good "I AM" lives for ever in His own unchangeable life and majesty, light and glory; but extends to us who are of the earth earthy a portion of His own unfailing essence; and He is willing for Christ's sake that all should come unto Him and be saved, and so live with Him for ever and ever, that so "in Thy light shall we see light." God's blessedness and glory, which is described to us as light above the brightness of the sun—light such as none could look on and live, will be extended to us. "The glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." It will be with the saints as it was with their Lord on earth on the holy mount of transfiguration, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And so Daniel says, at the close of his book, "They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;

and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." It is a great point to keep this ever before us in this life ; for here pains and troubles harass us, cares surround us, evil words and evil examples cast their shadows upon us, and draw down our hearts to this world though they be set on heaven. There is this sea which must be passed before we can reach "that haven where we would be" for ever. We have each in and for himself "to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." Yet angel hands beckon us on and on from above. Inward light grows brighter as this world's light darkens and lessens. Let us press on to Him with Whom "is the well of life : and in Whose light we shall see light."

SERMON XIV.

New Year's Day.

"Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."—PSALM xxxvii. 4, 5.

THIS psalm seems to me peculiarly full of thoughts, which should make us happy at the beginning of a new year. Other psalms and other passages of the Bible might perhaps bring before us more forcibly than this one the duty of employing our time aright, or the rapid flight of time, or the quick passing away of life, and so forth; but few, I think, would teach us better than this psalm what seems so especially suitable for our thoughts at the beginning of a new year; viz., trust in God. The mind of every one of us must almost be looking *forward* at this moment, contemplating what is to come; perhaps forming plans and schemes in our own minds, and bringing the experience of a past year, or of many years, to bear upon our proposed course and destiny for the future. All this runs through every mind almost as a matter of course. It is so natural to the ordinary constitution of the human mind to be full of hopes and schemes of future doings, future events,

future blessings, or future trials. Even the present time takes its colour from what we imagine in the future; and unless we take good and careful heed to ourselves, the *past*, which is really so important to our future state, is blotted out of our memory and thoughts, except in a few particular and more important events of our life. God teaches us a different rule. Think much more of the past (He rather says to us), use and improve and live well the present, but for the future *trust*, leave that to Me. "Take no thought for the morrow: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Now this is just the idea running through this 37th Psalm, and more especially contained in the verses of my text. What can be more comforting to a Christian heart than this assurance, "*Delight* thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring-it to pass"? The first teaches us love, the second teaches us faith, and both assure us that if we have but these God will give us our heart's desires, and make them come to pass. There are many things to teach us to desire these gifts of grace and faith and love. There is God's *goodness*. "His mercy is over all His works." There is His protection and care for us in that He is our "Father in heaven: making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust." There is His *intimate* and *exact* knowledge of every one of us: not a hair of our

head falleth to the ground without His knowledge and permission. There is also His love, of which the greatest proof He could give, He has given us, in sending to us His only Son from heaven. Now all these and many other considerations should urge us, brethren, to delight in the Lord, and put our trust in Him. But to them all He has added our own benefit and blessing, when He says, "Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

Yet perhaps few of us possess either of these dispositions in any degree worth speaking of. How many of us do really "delight in the Lord," really feel joy and pleasure in every thing which concerns God, or is connected with Him? True our Church is decorated with holly and evergreens at this season, to show our joy and delight in the Saviour's birth; but how many of us love our Sundays better than any other day in the week, because it is "the Lord's day"? How many of us love our Bible better than any other book, because it contains *God's* words, and not man's? How many of us are glad to give up our own ease or wishes, or amusements or occupations, to come here as often as we can, because this is *God's* house, and the service here rendered is to *God*? Which of us would, like the apostles, rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's name, and yield up our life rather than give up our faith? Now all this is what is meant by *delighting* in the Lord.

“Delight thou in the Lord ; and He shall give thee thy heart’s desires.” In other words, it is simply this—having our hearts filled with love to God. Without this all religion is barren and cold. No wonder if men find no enjoyment in religious duties and services, it is simply that their *hearts* are not touched with divine love, and it is only when we have love that we can have delight. And again, it is only when we thus delight in God that God, except it be in judgment, gives us the desires of our heart, and the wish of our minds. He first loveth us, then *we* have to return our love to Him, and then again *He* repays that love to us in answering our prayers, ah, oftentimes far more abundantly than we dare hope or ask ! “If ye shall ask *anything* in My name, I will do it :” but then the Lord goes on to say, thus : “If ye love Me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, *he* it is that loveth Me ; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” Thus love is shown by obedience, and our obedience is repaid by our prayers being unfailingly answered in some way. Love to God lies at the root of all. “Delight thou in the Lord ; and *then* He shall give thee thy heart’s desires.” Thus, if we would have our prayers answered, dear brethren, we must really learn to *love* God ; and if we love God, the only test is, that we keep His commandments.

Again, before love, however, comes faith; "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him." So, though faith without love is dead and useless, yet faith must come first, and produce *love* where it really exists. A bare faith, such as devils have—*i. e.* faith without *love*—is worse than none at all; it condemns instead of justifying a man; it increases our guilt by giving us light, while we still *prefer* darkness and walk in darkness. And it is only as we truly *love* God, that we shall indeed *trust* in Him, as my text bids us. Thus faith leads to love, and love makes our faith to become more than *faith*, to become *trust*; as it is here said, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and *trust* in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

What a beautiful history, in connection with this subject and day, is that of Abraham. God called upon him to rise up and leave his native land for one he knew nothing of; but *he obeyed*, and went. Afterwards God said, All this land will I give thee, and to thy seed after thee, though at the moment he had not so much as to set his foot on which he could call his own; and now, when far advanced in life, he had no child. *Still* he believed, because God had said it, and so all was fulfilled. Abraham was one who "committed His way unto the Lord;" for at each resting-place we read of his building there an altar unto the Lord, and calling upon the name of the Lord. He put His trust in Him, and all came to pass.

My brethren, in some such way God calls to all of us. He says, prefer future glory to present enjoyment; prefer unseen things to what you now see and hear; choose rather the kingdom of heaven than the fleeting things of earth; try to bear your cross with Christ, and for His sake, in some daily self-denial, or in doing good, or in resistance to temptation, prefer that to the greatest wealth, or pleasure, or ease, or enjoyment, which this world of sense has ever to offer. Though "*in* the world, be not *of* the world." Give up *all* to follow Christ, and trust all to Him. With that "ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness." It inspires a feeling such as S. Paul expresses when he says, "I rejoice in tribulation;" "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Nothing comes amiss to the true Christian. He learns to believe, to endure, to hope all things out of that spirit of charity in him which never faileth.

And this is indeed the sort of feeling we ought all to try and gain, *in* and *for* ourselves when we contemplate the beginning of a New Year. What a wide gulf it is which now divides us from this day last year! What thousands of unexpected events in and around ourselves, in our own homes, in our native land, in all the world, have come and gone within that little space of time—a year! It will be the same story again, or perhaps far more remarkably than now, a

year hence. As the world hastens on to its end, events will quicken and enlarge themselves so as to occupy still more and more the minds and hearts of men, so that the great day will overtake them as a thief. We have nothing here that we can any of us call our own. Every thing we see and enjoy is dependant upon life. And when in the parable the rich man contemplated his earthly estate thus: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," God said unto him, "Thou fool, THIS night thy soul shall be required of thee." So it might be with any one of us any day throughout the year.

What had we best do, my brethren? Listen to these words of my text: "Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Learn to interest your *hearts* in the work and objects of your religion. It is nothing without that. Even Solomon discovered this truth when he wrote these words: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Except our hearts be set on God, except our hearts be engaged in religion, it is all like the poor dead body which the soul has left, or like the skeleton of a man who was once alive in health and vigour, or like the pale shadow of a man falling upon the ground as he walks along when the sun is low. How few of us, I fear, *delight* in the Lord; how few of us find our chief joy in Him; how few of us give all that belongs to

Him the first and foremost place in our heart's affections. It is no wonder then, brethren, if our prayers are cold and dead. It is no wonder if our services and sermons, our prayers and our sacraments, seem to lose their effect upon men's souls. The fault, however, is not in them, but in ourselves. Here is the remedy for this, "Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire." Take a real pleasure in God, and the things of God, and then all will become smooth. In short, *love* God, and then all obedience is easy, every prayer is answered. "His commandments are not grievous" to him who delights himself in the Lord.

And so for the future. Which of us will be here, or at all as we are now, when this New Year is past and gone? Who will be beside us, whom shall we have lost, what new events will have tinged or altered our course of life, what changes will take place in our homes, in our parish, in our land? Such thoughts need not weigh upon us. Our simple rule is to do our duty where and as we are in life, and trust Him Who clothes the earth with grass, and gives to the lilies of the field a glory which no human skill can imitate or equal. He who feedeth the young ravens that call unto Him, how much more surely will He do all that is needful and right for you, "O ye of little faith"? "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." As it is said below, "The Lord ordereth a good man's going; and maketh his way

acceptable to Himself." A special providence attendeth upon all such. "The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Why, then, should we fear, or why be anxious? "Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

SERMON XV.

God will Shape thy Course.

"The Lord ordereth a good man's going : and maketh his way acceptable to Himself. Though he fall, he shall not be cast away : for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old ; and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."—PSALM xxxvii. 23-25.

THIS psalm is one of the five * which may be called "alphabetical" psalms, because each fresh sentence begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in its order. It is a psalm of singular beauty and consolation to every faithful heart. The main thought which runs through it from first to last is the sure punishment of the wicked in due time, though for a time they may escape it, and the certain reward of God's people sooner or later ; and to sustain our faith under all trials and difficulties which may come upon us in this life, it assures us that a special Providence really does watch over and guide God's faithful people, however difficult it may be for them at times to perceive and realize this. If we look through the verses as they come, we shall perceive, I think, what beautiful sentiments and assurances of God's care and love and protection they contain. Many a man's faith has of course been tried by seeing sinful

* ix. x. xxv. xxxiv.

men prosper at times by and through their sin, while others, who fear and love God, and try to fulfil all righteousness in themselves, are tried and beset with pains and troubles, misfortunes and anxieties. Yet all in the end is and will be right. God will then justify the righteous; but will utterly condemn the wicked. Their prosperity and freedom from cares, if they have it, is but for a moment. Even the brightest day in summer has a sure sunset to follow, as well as the cloudiest and darkest day of all in the year; and so it is with them. And thus this psalm begins: "Fret not thyself because of the ungodly; neither be thou envious against the evil doers. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and be withered even as the green herb. Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good: dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." And so the same sentiment of contrast between the reward eventually of righteousness, and the fate eventually of sinful people, runs all through this psalm. Thus it abounds in consolation for all who desire in their hearts to love God, because their reward is sure, their inheritance certain, in the kingdom of the resurrection. And so the psalmist would say to us, Be content, and be patient, whatever happens to you in life: all is for the best. His eye is ever upon thee, by night and by day. "The Lord

ordereth a good man's going: and maketh his way acceptable to Himself." Nay, God's blessing upon him shall not be only to himself, but for his sake it rests also upon those who come after him; for "his seed is blessed." "I have been young, and now am old; and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." It is very consolatory in trouble to look forward with assurance to its passing away, to its working good in us and for us, if borne aright; and to feel that all is overruled by a supremely good and wise and Almighty Providence watching over us by night and by day.

It was so with our Lord Jesus Christ. At this distance of time we see and know how God planned and ordered all the life and words and works of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth for us, and for our salvation. Yet from His birth to His resurrection from the dead, His life was one full of trials and sorrows, and labours and disappointments; but all was ordered for Him, so that "His seed," the true Israel of God, are even in this life in many ways "blessed," and will be so for ever and ever hereafter.

So it was also with Israel coming up out of Egypt. All at one time to them was trouble and fear on all sides; yet all was ordered for their good. No sooner had they set out to make their escape from bondage, than before them lay the apparently impassable Red Sea, with its waves rolling in their power from shore to

shore; behind was the army of Egypt in pursuit of them, and intending to bring them back once more to the miseries and slavery they were escaping from. Yet God made a way for His own defenceless people. As we often say, "Man's necessity is God's opportunity." He sent to them that dark cloud, which shielded them by day from the burning rays of that eastern sun; and a pillar of fire by night, to give them light in the darkness; and when they came to the shores of the Red Sea, He opened a way for them through the midst of the waters, which stood as an heap on the one side and on the other, while Israel passed through on dry ground. In this way God is sure to make a way of deliverance and of escape for all them that love Him. He maketh a way in the sea, and a pathway through the deep; or turneth the wilderness into a garden, and maketh the dry ground springs of water; or He may open heaven to view, as He did to S. Stephen; so that in one way or other His own people are sure of help and salvation from Him in all times of trouble.

But when the psalmist says in my text, "The Lord ordereth a good man's going: and maketh his way acceptable unto Himself," where shall we find one who can rightly be called "the good man"? "None is good save One, that is God;" so that really these words of my text strictly apply only to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only good man who has ever lived on earth, being perfect God besides being perfect man—born in a way

above nature, so as not to have in Him our sure and perpetual inheritance of sin. Still we should do wrong surely to the meaning of the psalmist, if we were to confine the words of my text only to Christ our Lord; for if we fear and love God, and try to keep His commandments in all things, and to do His will, and desire to *be* good and to *do* good, then are we "accepted in the Beloved," and for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake are accounted to be what we are not really, both holy, and righteous, and good. It is the faith which makes the effort, and raises in us the desire to be good, which makes us to be accounted before God so far better and different from what we can ever hope really to be in this life. None is holy but the Lord. It is the testimony of the blessed apostle S. John, that we know so well, that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Thus for any of us to claim to ourselves the great promise contained in my text, there are two things which we must have in us. First, we must have the true and right faith, which shall make us desire to serve, fear, and love God above all else. True faith makes us desire that God's will may be done in and by us as it is done in heaven, and makes us see through the veil which hangs before our eyes; so that God is no longer afar off, but, as David expresses it, "about

our path, and about our bed"—everywhere present and near to us, by day and by night, by sea and on land. And thus we become good, so far as we ever can be so, because where such faith exists, there must be also the presence of God's Holy Spirit working in us more and more. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." A Christian can no more stand still in grace than he can stay his days and years from multiplying behind him, or stay this globe from its daily circuit round its own axis. Grace in every heart which has ever had it must be ever, like our day, advancing to its zenith, or declining to obscurity and night; or, like that temple in which it dwells, growing from childhood to the perfect man, or losing power, as each of us does as we grow from perfect manhood into old age and natural decay. How little most people think of this! Many seem to think that the perfection of grace may be obtained at any moment, seek it when and how they please. How many rest their hopes of it, if they have any, to a dying bed; but when that comes, in far the greater number of cases, there is then no power, and no heart—no time really, and no opportunity, to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Trees do not put forth their young leaves, and spread and grow in winter; but are only bare and bleak then—leafless, and it may be covered with snow. The harvest never comes, except the seed be first sown months before; and that must be done in the one only

and right season, which, if once lost, is lost for ever. Look where we will, there is one prevailing rule in all God's works—for them to begin, to grow, to decline, and to decay. But though we all act on this certain knowledge in all human things, we blind our eyes to it only too often in the matter of the soul. How far happier for us, if we would but try to feel and to bear in mind that to do God's will as perfectly as we can, and so to become more and more like unto Him, is the first and greatest work of all which we have to accomplish in this life. All else will fall into its right place, if this is but put first and foremost. And that it may be so, it is very necessary that we should arrive at this disposition of faith as early as possible in life. S. John tells us "God's commandments are not grievous;" yet how many there are who find it quite the reverse! The secret of this difference lies mainly in the period at which each of us began to desire and strive to do God's will. Habit is second nature in us all; so if young people give their hearts to God *while they are young*, they find then, as life advances, no difficulty in doing many things for God's sake which others find to be an impossibility to themselves. For this reason, our early years are to all of us the most precious of all. The man is what the child has made him. The great features of our life and character may be traced back for the most part to the indistinct conceptions of right and wrong, and motives and rules, which we look back

to as long since (it may be) past and dead and gone. For the most part, in the great features of our life and character, we harden like the statue which the modeller has made first in soft clay, which gradually dries, and becomes unalterably fixed and hard. This it is which makes the prevalent rules and examples of every home so important to those rising around us. If parents never read their Bible to themselves or their children; if they misspend that one only day in each week which is given to all of us more or less to call our own, and spend as we please, that we may at least give some part of it back to God; if parents give no possible proof that they try to love and serve God in their life and by their *words*, and to set a good and holy example to all those around them, who look up to them, and take their first impressions of right and wrong from them, how can we expect that children should grow up "in the fear and nurture of the Lord"? And if they don't do that, what value has the promise in my text in their sight? Yet what an incentive to good it is! What an incentive to all of us, whatever our age or position in life may be, to try to *be* good and *do* good, do not these words contain: "The Lord ordereth a good man's going, and maketh his way acceptable to Himself. Though he fall, he shall not be cast away: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; and yet saw I *never* the righteous forsaken, nor his *seed* begging their bread."

SERMON XVI.

The Remembrance of Sins.

"For I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin."

PSALM xxxviii. 18.

THIS psalm is the third in order of those seven which are called "The Penitential Psalms." It is used to this day in the Jewish synagogues on the day of atonement, when, as S. Paul says, "there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."* My text is really the key to the whole psalm. It contains those two necessary conditions of all forgiveness of sins by God; viz., confession of them, and sorrow for them leading to amendment of life for the time to come. God requires both of these as *conditions* of our forgiveness at His hands. Without these no man can be said truly to have repented, and without repentance there is no forgiveness.

We, as fellow-Christians, are bound to forgive one another, even again and again indefinitely, but God is in no way *bound* to forgive us our sins. He is not *obliged* to do so. He promises to do so for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, but it is only of His free grace

* Heb. x. 3.

and mercy, not of necessity or obligation. Thus, as a condition of our forgiveness, God demands it of us that we must look back to what is past and done, as well as forward in our intentions for the future. It is not enough that a man should simply *leave off* his old habits of sin, and determine and try to amend his life for the time to come. All this relates only to the *future*, it touches only what is to come. Though we never can *undo* our past sins, yet God requires that we should do exactly what my text expresses, and what David himself *did*, we know, on two memorable occasions, "Confess our sins, and be sorry for them."

To do this of course there must be something done by us even beforehand; viz., we must learn by looking into ourselves, and looking back upon our past life, what we may have done amiss. For we cannot of course confess our sins, till we have learnt what our sins have been. But if we earnestly and faithfully do this, relying for our propitiation and forgiveness on the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, then God for His sake hath promised to us all forgiveness. As S. John says, in these well-known words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And again, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (One): and He is the propitiation for our

sins." Just as David says in another psalm, "I acknowledged my sin unto the Lord, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will *confess* my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

But now any one may ask, What is the use of thus looking back to what is past and gone, and can never be recalled or undone? *Why* should God require this of us? Does He not know everything? Does He not see and know every heart? Are not all our thoughts and words and works not only known unto Him, but written down in His book? The answer to all such questions lies in this, that by accusing and condemning our own selves for what we have done amiss, we humbly and reverently acknowledge God's right and power to punish us, if He saw fit: we admit the justice of His indignation towards us. There is an instance in our Bible which will exactly illustrate this. When Achan had committed a trespass against God, and took and kept for himself silver and gold, and a costly garment found in the city of Ai, and had hid them, his sin was discovered at once by God selecting him amongst all the assembled people, and in their presence. But though his trespass was thus known, yet Joshua moved him to acknowledge his guilt, saying, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me."

Thus confession is good for the sake of others who

may be led to do the same, or may be warned against falling in like manner as we have done. But for our own sake more especially must this be done. Nothing so adds to our own peace of mind as to make what we call "a clean breast of it." We often read of people who have committed some terrible crime, it may be years ago, who have had no peace of mind by day or night for weeks, or months, or years, till they have openly and truly confessed all the circumstances of their crime and its motive; but as soon as ever they have done this, they have felt as though a heavy weight were taken off them, which lay upon them and oppressed them at every turn. The more tender and sensitive a man's conscience is, the more heavily lies the burden of any great deed, or continual course of sin; so that it is a great mercy to us that God *does* require that we should "confess our sins, and be sorry for them."

Again, to do so is a great help and security against the recurrence of such transgressions. A man can hardly confess with real sorrow a past transgression, and return to it immediately; or, after a little while, frequently; so that a true and hearty confession of sin is a great security to keeping us in the one strait and narrow path of life. This is a matter very plainly brought before us in our order for public worship. The first thing we are called upon to do at morning or evening prayer is to acknowledge, like the publican in the temple, that "we have erred, and strayed from God's

ways like lost sheep; that we have done many things which we ought not to have done; and have left undone many things which we ought to have done." Then again the Litany begins with a separate, and then a joint prayer to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to have mercy upon us miserable sinners, to remember not our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers. So in the service for Holy Communion, after each commandment we ask God's forgiveness for the breach of it, and desire Him to incline our hearts to keep this law. But let us remember this, if a man does not feel and acknowledge his sin to be an offence done against God, if he is merely sorry for his sin because it has brought upon him either sickness or sorrow, or trouble or pain of some kind, as sin is sure to do in the end, in one way or other, if this is *all*, his is no true and acceptable repentance.

We see this difference at once by a comparison of the repentance of David, or of S. Peter, after his thrice denial, with the repentance of Judas. David says, "My sin is ever before me. Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." S. Peter, at a glance, when his eye caught the Saviour's eye from the end of the hall, "went out and wept bitterly." Judas also "repented himself;" but there was no sense in him of evil *done against God*. His was "a repentance to be repented of." There was no turning to God for pardon and forgiveness; nothing but the

blank despair of an already lost soul. To keep men from falling into wilful transgression, God tells us, "Be sure your sin **WILL** find you out"—words which all experience proves to be exactly true. Men often perish in and by means of the very sin they have done. The most successful course of vice and wickedness brings with it no satisfaction. Some sure judgment from God follows upon it sooner or later; nay, even after generations suffer from the effects of the sin and misconduct of a former generation. It is an old promise daily being fulfilled before our eyes: "I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me."

But in looking back upon our past life and conduct, a common temptation to most of us is to begin at once to make excuses to ourselves, if not to God, for what we have done amiss. Let us distrust ourselves, and the sincerity of our repentance, directly we find this to be the case with ourselves. At the great day of judgment, men will stand self-condemned for all that they have done amiss. Had God never given to us a revelation of His will, nor grace to fulfil it, we might be excused and excusable. But the promise to us is, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" This is the one

great preservative against sin: "Greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world." A man's power over Satan, his resistance to evil, is exactly in proportion to the measure of the Spirit which is in him. "In the latter days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Our Lord Jesus Christ alone was free from all sin; for in Him dwelt the Spirit without measure.

It is in no strength of our own that we can ever overcome, but only through the mighty working in us of the power of the Spirit of God. So said the Lord at the moment of His ascension into heaven: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." From that moment we find no fears or failing of faith in him. The very denier of his Master seven weeks before is the bold, unflinching apostle S. Peter, who brings three thousand souls to Christ by baptism by one Whit Sunday's sermon, and opens the door of faith both to Jew and Gentile. All those common sins which prevail around us, what do they show except that so many have resisted, or quenched, or driven away the Holy Spirit from themselves? Any of us may do as S. Stephen speaks of the Jews: "Ye do always *resist* the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." This is the great gift of all which our Lord left us on earth, and ascended into heaven to send down upon our world: "And the Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father, He shall abide with you *for ever*." It is this

gift which keeps alive the Church in all lands, through all times. It is this presence of God in the hearts of Christian people which spreads the faith of Christ, the gospel of salvation, over the whole world, leading some to offer themselves, others to give their time, their prayers, or their offerings, for all those good works which, amid all our sins and shortcomings, are going on around us. Yes, brethren, if you are moved to "confess your wickedness, and to be sorry for you sins," remember that the one and only security against future temptations and future falls lies in your possession of the Holy Spirit's presence, and in His possession of you. "Know ye not," says S. Paul, "that your *bodies* are the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. . . . For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON XVII.

My Time is in Thy Hand.

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."

PSALM xxxix. 4, 5.

THIS 39th Psalm is better known than some psalms to many of us from its frequent use in the service for the burial of the dead. In our present service book this psalm and the ninetieth are the two chosen for use. In the first Prayer Book of King Edward VI., the psalms and the lesson from 1 Cor. xv. were to be used either before or after the burial of the corpse; and then the psalms selected for use were the cxvi., cxxxix., and cxlvi., after which there was commonly a celebration of Holy Communion, with the epistle taken out of 1 Thess. iv., and the gospel from S. John vi. This 39th Psalm seems to have been composed by David almost for his own personal service; for when at the close of his life he was delivering over the kingdom to Solomon his son, we find in 1 Chron. xxix. 15 a portion of this very psalm in its *exact* words. There David is made to say, "For we are strangers before Thee, and

sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." So we may take this psalm to be a real expression of David's review of his own life when very near its close. And though the thought of death must have been very different to David to what it is or ought to be to us, who have the knowledge of God and of our own immortality in soul and body revealed to us through Jesus Christ our Lord, who Himself rose from the dead, and has promised to all of us that we in like manner shall be recalled to life; yet David's expressions with regard to this life are fully borne out by the experience of each of us. Take the longest lived amongst us, and at the close of his days, his past years will appear almost as a dream; what occurred in his early days seems to be but yesterday, and yesterday's events are scarcely remembered in the least. The oldest person around us will say, as he looks back to his days that are gone, "Lord, Thou hast made my days as it were but an handbreadth; and mine age is even as nothing in respect of Thee: and verily every man living is but vanity." I am but a stranger and sojourner upon earth, a mere traveller passing along the road of life, and stopping at an inn for a few days or years at most. "Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth."

Life is short to all of us in three ways. First, as compared to God's eternity: with Him a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years. No

end, no beginning, no change. "As for *Thy* years they endure throughout all generations." Next, our life is short when compared with our own eternity which we have in view. Here we can hardly realize in the least degree the thought of no change, no limit, no fears, and no uncertainty. To compare one drop of water to the ocean, rolling fathoms, or it may be miles, deep around all lands, is as nothing to the difference between this life and eternity. And so too in a third way life is but a span to any of us, when we reflect that, short as it is, out of it evolves all that we are for ever to be or to have. We think of that sad story in the parable of Dives looking back to his past life; tormented in the flame, and desiring to warn his brethren by his own fate, and asking for Lazarus to be sent in compassion to him across the great gulf. But that cannot be. What he was *then*, he *is* now, though eighteen hundred years have gone by; and what he is now, he *will* be still, when time has ceased to be for ever and ever. Thus it is that great events from trivial causes rise. Just as the acorn grows into the vast wide-spreading tree, overshadowing a large space of ground, and continuing for hundreds of years to do so; and the spring of water which scarce issued forth at first, grows into the river, and the river into the sea, and flows and reflows in endless succession. Such is our life in its results—so great from so small a beginning. In all these ways, as compared with God's immortality, as compared with

our own coming eternity of being, or as the humble parent of our future great reward or punishment ; in all these ways this life to every one of us is but a span. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am."

It is a great thing, brethren, for us all, while in life, and health, and strength, to realize in some measure to ourselves how short that life is, how great the importance therefore of each and every day. David prays to know his end and the number of his days, that he may be duly impressed with the thought of how frail he is. This we may all see and learn by our daily experience in life. Even if our days should be prolonged far beyond the lot of most people, still we know that our real *working days* on earth will be but a proportion of all, and that in extreme old age the end of life is in many respects exactly similar to its beginning. It comes upon us, and leaves us leaning upon others more than upon ourselves, with a failure of memory, with impaired sight, and impaired hearing, often as little able to walk and guide ourselves as the little child first feeling its feet.

Yet how blessed it is for us that we know no more than this. What should we each be if we really did "see and know our end, and the number of our days!" if we foresaw by any means the day and the hour of our death, and how it would come to pass,

whether suddenly or slowly, early or late, by natural decay, or sudden violence, or by accident !

There never has been but One who has foreseen the day and the means by which death would come upon Him, and that was our Lord Jesus Christ. He was born by His own will, that He might die. He gave Himself for us. And before Him that hour, which had to come, and was so foreseen, seemed more or less present at all times ; the thought of it oppressed Him. " I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." " Mine hour is *not yet* come." " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." " And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." " From that time began Jesus to tell His disciples how that He must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Jews, and be crucified, and after three days rise again." These are the frequent indications we have scattered throughout the several gospels of our Lord's foreknowledge of His end, and all He had to endure ; so that the evangelist S. John ushers in his longer account of the last supper with these words : " Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father."

Happy is it for us, brethren, that *we* have no foreknowledge of the same kind. What a shade would be

cast over our brightest hours of life—the innocence of childhood, the cheering scenes of our opening life, or our busiest and active days—if *we* knew all along the exact time and mode of our approaching end, exactly how and when it would overtake us. I say it is far happier for us that all this is shrouded from our eyes by a veil we cannot penetrate. It is the *present* moment, and only the present moment, which God gives us. We can scarcely call that our own; for the present moment is instantly the past, and the future is not ours at all. But it is just this incentive to watch and pray which Christ gives us, *because we know not* what lies before us. "Watch and pray; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." And so S. James speaks of the folly of laying down plans for future days which are distant: "Ye know not what shall be on the *morrow*. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Some there are whose days seem lengthened out as though in reward of a holy life; while others, on the contrary, seem taken away, as it is said in one book, "His soul pleased the Lord, therefore *hasted* He to take him away." On the other hand, the very reward held out in the fifth commandment, which the apostle calls "the first commandment with promise," is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, *that* thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It is not so many years ago that one of the greatest misfor-

SERMON XVIII.

Lo, I Come.

"Burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin, hast Thou not required : then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me, that I should fulfil Thy will, O my God : I am content to do it ; yea, Thy law is within my heart."—PSALM xl. 9, 10.

THIS verse from the 40th Psalm is very remarkable, even amongst the many wonderful passages which the book of Psalms contains. Volumes upon volumes have been written, and will be so still, upon those few words of this verse alone, "Lo, I come;" for they contain the greatest announcement that has ever yet been heard, or will be, till at the last day the cry again will be, "Lo, I come." This "Lo, I come" is the greatest fact which has ever occurred in history; for here is the announcement of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The promise of His coming was heard from the very beginning. He is "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." It was repeated again and again in a thousand different ways, and by a thousand different heralds at different times; and the promise still rings in our ears, to be once more fulfilled in the latter days of the world, "Lo, I come."

God has once become man for our sakes, and for our salvation. The Creator of all things—for “without Him was not anything made that was made”—has clothed Himself with man’s flesh and blood. He Who made us, and made all things, has taken *upon* Himself and *unto* Himself for ever and ever our human nature; and “being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And yet He still says to us, in warning of the last day, “Lo, I come.”

Thus it is that the whole sum and substance of the gospel are contained in these few words, “Lo, I come.” It was the promise of His first coming; it is the promise of His coming again. And we may assert this with the most perfect confidence and assurance, because S. Paul states this as a fact in his epistle to the Hebrews. In the tenth chapter of that epistle he describes how useless and powerless were all the old legal sacrifices to take away sin, or to purge the heart and conscience of the sinner from guilt. Though they were instituted of God, and continued through so many hundreds of years, yet their use consisted chiefly in pointing the minds of men to the necessity of *some* atonement for sin beyond and out of themselves, and so to the one only true sacrifice and propitiation which was in due time to be offered up to God. It is a law in God’s kingdom, which we cannot reason about, because the cause is hidden from us as yet,

that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

The law of Moses was, as S. Paul states it in connection with this passage of my text, "a *shadow* of good things to come;" for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, should take away *sins*." It merely restored the worshipper to the congregation of God's people as an outward condition of that restoration, but could not touch the heart and conscience. Those old sacrifices had, however, two principal objects in them, the first and chief of which was to point the true believer in God *on* to the one great and true sacrifice for all sin, which in due time it was ordained and promised should come to pass. So that holy men of old were saved, and accounted righteous before God, in looking *forward* by faith to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice of Himself, just as we in these latter days are saved by the faith which looks *back* to what has been already done and finished by Him for man's salvation.

Thus S. Paul says, in that tenth chapter of the Hebrews: "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The wonderful history of this scheme of man's redemption through Christ began, as it would seem from certain passages in God's word, even before all time. The Son offered to become Himself a willing sacrifice and atonement to the Father, even before the world began. Thus S. Paul writes to the Ephesians at the beginning of his epistle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ : according as He hath chosen us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

And thus it was, my brethren, that, after thousands of years had passed, this old purpose of God, "Lo, I come," *was* fulfilled indeed on Christmas night. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law ;" and the angels of heaven, in mighty chorus, rejoiced that these words were now fulfilled—"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

Thus Jesus Christ our Lord was born, and lived through thirty silent years, growing up like some beautiful and rare tree hidden for years amid the

shades and recesses of some vast forest, till the time came that He should fulfil God's will, and make Himself known unto men. This subjection and hiding of His real majesty and being—this entire denial of all selfish and personal ends and aims, and of His private will, is set forth beautifully in S. John's gospel when, in the story of the well at Sychar, "the disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples to one another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." All else was forgotten, and subjected to that one fact, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." See how frequently in S. John's gospel there is mention again and again made, "He (that is The Father) hath sent Me." Christ had no will of His own, but to fulfil perfectly and to the letter the object of His mission, though it cost Him far more even than life. And thus, when the great and bitter hour of the cross was close at hand—in that agony in the garden, when drops of blood were forced through His skin, and fell on that cold ground—His prayer still was, "Father, if Thou be willing, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless *not* My will, but Thine, be done."

And so all was fulfilled in and by Him—all that had been written of Him to be, and to do, and to suffer, "in the law, and in the prophets, and in the psalms"—all

was finished. He began the work, and He carried it through for us unto the end. His last words were, "It is finished !" "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Brethren, we rejoice that our great Redeemer did not give way, and shrink back ; but by overcoming death in His own person, "hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." An everlasting entrance into everlasting life—a door which shall never be closed—hath been made for God's faithful and chosen people—a way through the Red Sea of His blood for their entrance into the Jerusalem which is above, the true land of Canaan. "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." But then, my brethren, what ever follows is this : We must do our part. We must accept and claim this inheritance of the saints on God's terms—not our own—and in God's own appointed way. Christ came, as it is here said, "to fulfil Thy will, O my God : I am content to do it : yea, Thy law is within my heart."

Now our great aim and object in life should be, that we may in all things be made like unto Christ. The more we are like unto Him, the nearer shall we be to Him in His glorious and everlasting kingdom. It needs only the faith to see and feel and know what Christ was and did for our sakes, to make us return His love towards us by our poor love to Him ; and that is *best*

shown by our trying to do as He did, to live as He lived, walking in His footsteps, and following as near as we can those clear directions given us in His gospel for the rule and regulation of our hearts and lives. It is perfectly useless for any one to talk of faith, or to fancy that he believes, and to hope for salvation, if he does not live and walk "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called," if we are not heartily trying to do what our Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to do perfectly, that is, "the will of God." It is one of the most frequent warnings given to us in different ways, that we be not hearers only, but doers of the word; not merely calling Christ Lord, Lord, but doing the things that He saith unto us; not building our house on the sand, but on the rock. So long as any one lives on in any one known sin, without caring or trying to overcome it; or so long as he neglects any one clear and positive duty which he knows of and can perform, so long we are not walking by faith, we are not doing God's will as we might; and therefore, unless we turn and amend, we shall not be saved. Though these words of my text, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," are thus primarily spoken of Christ, we are sure, yet I say they belong truly to us who believe in Him. It is written of us in God's book, that we should do His will in all things. How far do our hearts make response, and say, "I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within my heart"? My brethren, let us try to bear in mind,

that to do God's will in this world is the one great end of our birth and being. It is for this that we are born and sent into this world; and it is that we may more and more perfectly accomplish this that we so often say, upon our knees, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Is not this very different from some notions in which many indulge themselves? We often hear people talk in these days as though, provided a man professes to hold to and to acknowledge a certain set form of words or truths, and confesses himself, however indifferently, to be a sinner, that that is all that is necessary; and it matters little what sort of life a man is really leading upon earth, whether he were consistently trying to do God's will or not. But I hope I may say of all of you, as S. Paul does to his flock at Ephesus, "Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Christ Jesus." They are prophetic words spoken of Christ which He fulfilled: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." It was, as He Himself said in that passage I have already alluded to, His "meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work." Brethren, we must try and pray to have this mind of Christ in us. It is not our natural possession or inheritance. It will not come to us all of itself; but it has to be sought for, prayed for, and exercised more and more, and drawn forth in us. It is the gift and work in us of God's most Holy

Spirit. It was because in Christ dwelt the Spirit without measure, that He did God's will altogether perfectly; and it is as we have in us more and more that blessed Comforter that we shall do God's will better and still better, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Do not let any of us deceive ourselves. While we allow ourselves in any known sin, such as drunkenness, swearing, or fleshly lusts which war against the soul; or in the neglect of any one known positive duty, such as never to receive the holy communion, which Christ enjoins on all who believe in Him to do in remembrance of Him; so long we are not doing God's will; and if we are not serving Him here, we shall never be His in the kingdom of the resurrection. But let every faithful servant of Christ, who in humility *is* trying to do God's will, be comforted and encouraged. The more any one tries to do God's will, the *easier* it becomes to do it. "God's commandments are not grievous" to His own people. Their happiness consists in feeling that they are trying to love, fear, and honour God in this life; that they have His approval; that they enjoy His blessing. In the end their reward is sure. Our Lord has said, three times over, "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." And the apostle says the same: "Be not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

SERMON XIX.

Hospital Uses.

"Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble."—PSALM xli. 1.

THE psalm before this ends with mention of God's care for the poor and the afflicted; this psalm begins with commending the sufferings of others to the care of each of us, as a sure way of drawing down God's blessing upon ourselves.

There are no less than three versions of this first verse of the 41st Psalm. There is the one in the Bible translated from the Hebrew; there is the version in the daily psalms, as we use them in the Prayer Book, translated from the Greek or "Septuagint" copy of the Scriptures; and there is this version which I have selected as my text, standing the last of the offertory sentences: "Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble." And I have chosen this rather than either of the former versions, because I think it will the more easily connect itself with the double object we have before us this day. It is happily becoming more and more to be a rule in all churches to have special services

and collections as thankofferings to God at the conclusion of the harvest season. I invite you all once more to-day to join in this mode of expressing our gratitude to the great Giver of all good for His gifts to us of the harvest which is now gathered in. Nor do I think that any object is more suitable for our alms at this moment than our own county hospital for the sick and afflicted. About two thousand five hundred persons from our own immediate neighbourhood every year benefit by our hospital; some thousand or more enter it as in-patients; and over fifteen hundred become out-patients during the year; and I think this one word in my text, "provideth," especially connects this verse with the double subject thus before us; for the harvest is altogether God's "providing" for our wants to be supplied, and the hospital "provides" for the cure and relief of such a large number of sick and suffering people.

First, then, the harvest is God's providing. It is His gift to us. Though we prepare the land, and sow the seed, yet no care or skill on our part can make that seed to grow or to ripen. One sharp frost out of season; one severe blight, sent we know not how nor why; a plague of insects; or a perpetually rainy season; or its reverse, a bright sunshine without dew or rain all the year long; any of these things, and many other means which are at God's command, might any year destroy the whole fruits of our labour. But God in His good-

ness "provides" that it should be otherwise. He did so last year; He has just done so again now. He "provideth" for us, who are altogether dependent upon Him, seed-time and harvest, and summer and winter, and cold and heat, and day and night, drought and rain in their due measure. We often think of these things as though they were our right, because they are so regularly and so unfailingly bestowed upon us from year to year.

Nevertheless, brethren, they are altogether God's gifts to us, God's providence; they come of His goodness, they are not our own. In the midst of our greatest abundance, no less than in a time of famine, the same prayer is due to God from the hearts of all, both rich and poor, in acknowledgment of all this, "Give us day by day our daily bread," all that is good for us, all that is needful, for we depend for all on Thee. "Thou openest Thine hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness." This year's harvest is not exactly the same as last year's; there is always some difference. Last year we had the finest harvest, and the finest summer weather that could be; and though some people began this year to despond at one moment, yet when the time of harvest drew nigh we have had no drawbacks from the weather early or late. And if this were really true of us throughout our land, "Let the people praise Thee, O God: yea, let *all* the people praise Thee;" then would the next sentence be surely fulfilled to us, "Then shall

the earth bring forth her increase: and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing."

But it is not the time of prosperity in all things which most turns the hearts and thoughts of all people Godward. Nay, is it not a most true declaration of the prophet of old—Jeremiah—"Lord, when Thy judgments are in all the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"? Few of us can bear for long a period of prosperity and plenty in all things. It is like standing on a pinnacle till our heads turn giddy. Thus when we ought to be most thankful, we are oftentimes most thankless; when we ought to be most godly, we are but too often most godless. It needs infinite grace from above for any of us to bear for long prosperity in all things with a thankful and a trustful heart toward God.

Here is the secret of many troubles and sorrows in life, sent upon us by God in His *love* and in His care for us. It is not impossible, brethren, for us to be good, and holy, and loving towards others when we are rich, and prosperous, and happy; only it is far *more difficult* than when the reverse is our lot at any time. Is not this the lesson conveyed to us in so many ways? There is especially the parable of Dives and Lazarus. There is also that instance of the rich man determining to pull down his barns and build larger ones, because his goods had so increased; and then planning, after storing away provision enough for years

to come, happen what might, to take his ease, without one thought for God, or His poor, or any one but for himself; but God said before that day was over, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So," adds our Lord, "is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is *not* rich toward God." The sure way, my brethren, of enjoying richly God's best earthly gifts is by the constant recollection that they are not our own; no certain inheritance; His, and not ours; we stewards only, and not possessors; using the portion which we have at any time, be it little or much, thankfully, humbly, religiously, and liberally towards others. "Freely ye have received, freely give," said our Lord to His apostles. "There is that scattereth," says Solomon, "and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

Does not my text convey exactly the same truth? "Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble." And the next verse but one which follows says, "The Lord shall comfort him, when he lieth sick upon his bed: Lord, make Thou all his bed in his sickness." As he has comforted and thought for others in their distress, so wilt Thou comfort and think of him in his hour of need.

Brethren, this is one occasion come round to us again when each one of you *has* the opportunity of doing a little for the sick and suffering in the world around us. In our hospital every effort is made more and more to do all that can be devised for the world of sick and suffering around us. Our Lord Himself, as it were, walked the hospitals in His days on earth ; for wherever He went, we are told, they brought forth their sick and laid them in the way, "that they might touch but the hem of His garment : and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." It is the continually repeated history of His life on earth, that "He healed their sick." This year one great improvement has been effected in our hospital, and I have been very glad to be very directly connected with the change. The whole nursing and training of nurses is now placed under the entire charge and care of a lady by birth and education, who has been trained herself in hospitals, and will we hope before long raise a school of nurses to be trained year by year, and sent forth to minister in private families, both rich and poor. Other very great improvements and alterations have been made during the last ten years or so past, and many others are in contemplation. Besides, a hospital is the great school for educating men in medical and surgical skill. They gain great experience in the various phases of disease, and in dealing with them. In this way a hospital is really a great benefit to all classes, rich as well as poor. There we

provide for the poor ; but the treatment of them benefits ourselves. And even in a still more selfish point of view, looking at the matter apart from Christian sympathy, which alone should influence us, how many thousands of pounds does a hospital save to the parish rates of a neighbourhood ? If a poor man meets with a severe accident, without a moment's notice, or any order being required, he is taken into the hospital, fed, attended, nursed, it may be, for many weeks together, and then perhaps is restored to health and strength, and able to go about his work again as before. But suppose he had not the hospital to go to at a moment's notice, then he might have lingered on a far longer time, laid up in his own home, badly attended and badly nursed, causing great expense both to his family and his parish ; and in many cases, from want of care and appliances, have become a cripple for life, and so a permanent burden on his parish to the day of his death, which no upright and honest labouring man likes to be. So, I say, apart from all Christian considerations of duty, simply in a selfish point of view, a great institution of this kind deserves our generous and ready support, and especially at this harvest season. So many accidents occur, as we all know, in the harvest-time—accidents with horses, accidents from machinery (which is now more than ever used), accidents by a fall off a stack, or from a loaded waggon—that this provision for accidents and misfortunes is never more useful than during the harvest-time

of all in the year which is just over. Nor ought we to forget the immense usefulness of our hospital when that terrible collision at Thorpe took place, just over a year since. How many have reason to be grateful for the care and attention they received within its walls at a moment's notice.

But it seems almost wrong to put forward any of these lower considerations in this place, to induce people to join in any good work. In this place surely we should talk and think only of God's will and of God's goodness to us, what He gives to us, and what He desires that we should render back to Him, and do for one another freely and gladly. Again and again He tells us that He will deal with each of us in our final judgment as we deal with one another in the little trifling concerns and duties of every-day life. "With the same measure that ye mete withal shall it be measured to you again." If we would have our sins forgiven at God's hands, we *must* forgive one another. If we would have mercy shown to us, we must show mercy to others. If we would desire to have good things given to us, we must give to others. We shall all reap in heaven as we sow on earth. This is God's universal rule. "Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver *him* in the time of trouble." "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for verily I

say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." How different will life appear to us, if we but remember continually that God regards the daily life and motives and works of each one of us! And all of us may do some good in the world, if we have but the heart and desire to do it. As we often say, "Where there's a will, there's a way." The poor widow at the gate of the temple might well have excused *herself* from giving anything to the offerings of God; but she gave her *all*—the last farthing she possessed in the world—"all she had, even all her living."

But the faithful never fail to find that God does somehow provide for them. In old time we read of the ravens sent daily to Elijah in the wilderness. In modern times I have read of birds sent, as it were, directly by His providence to a mission party shut out by deep and long continued snows from all supplies of food, and on the point of starving. But every day we live affords thousands of instances of the same kind. Not only the birds of the air have no provision beyond the moment, but find that supply continually; but we little think how each little child amongst us is provided for from day to day, without a care or thought of its own, by that instinctive love which God has sown in every parent's heart. And no less, brethren, every one of us of riper years, we who rise early and go forth to our work and to our labour, whatever it be, until the even-

ing, what right have we to reckon upon our immunity from some great bodily ill, or from some terrible accident which may deprive us of life, or of all power of usefulness in the world, from day to day? It is God's gift to us that we are so preserved, given us that we may serve Him before all things, and "by love serve one another." Let us pray day by day to do better, and to be better; to do more for God, and more for one another. Let us remember the blessedness of thinking of others rather than ourselves. Let us remember this promise in my text: "Blessed is the man that provideth for the sick and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble."

SERMON XX.

Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee !

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God: when shall I come and appear before God?"—PSALM xlii. 1, 2.

THIS 42nd Psalm is the first psalm of the second of the five books into which the psalter was divided. This division is still marked in our psalter; for if we look at the end of the following psalms, xli, lxxii, lxxxix., cvi., we find the word "Amen," thus marking the conclusion of each of these original divisions of the Book of Psalms. The first book is more than all the rest "the psalms of David." In this second book one at least, the twenty-second, is ascribed to Solomon, and one, viz., the fiftieth, to Asaph. There is also this remarkable difference, that in the first book God is called by His covenant name to Israel of "Jehovah" no less than two hundred and seventy-two times, but by His name "Elohim,"* that is, the God of nature, or of *all* men—not of the Jews only—only fifteen times; but

* It is much to be regretted that this distinction has not been observed in our translation throughout; it would be well if "Elohim" always stood for "God," "Jehovah" for "Lord."

here in this second book the reverse is the case; the name "Jehovah" occurs only thirty times, but the name "Elohim" one hundred and sixty-four times.

It is more than probable that these two psalms, the 42nd and 43rd, were originally one psalm, but for some reason at some time were separated into two, as we have them now. This 42nd is still used by the Jews in the services of the great festival of tabernacles. In our Bible heading it is ascribed "to the sons of Korah." Now, what does this mean? There are twelve psalms in all ascribed "to the sons of Korah;" viz., the 42nd to 49th, 84th, 85th, 87th, 88th Psalms. In the sixth chapter of the Book of Numbers we read how Korah perished, but not his children. And it has been supposed that they, in gratitude for their preservation, formed themselves into a religious association, and especially devoted themselves to the choir services of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple. We find from 1 Chronicles vi. that Samuel was one of the sons of Korah; they may have founded the "schools of the prophets."

But S. Augustine gives another and very different interpretation of this word "Korah." He says "Korah is equivalent to Calvaria. Why is Christ thought to be connected with Calvaria? Does it not at once occur to you that He was crucified on Calvary? Unquestionably it does. Therefore the sons of His passion, the sons redeemed by His blood, the sons of His cross, who

bear on their forehead that which His enemies erected on Calvary, are sons of Korah ; to them is this psalm sung as a psalm for understanding."

There is one other point especially to be noticed in this 42nd Psalm, and that is the mention of mount Hermon in it. Now, mount Hermon stood in the old kingdom of Bashan, on the other side of the Jordan, which flowed at its foot. Dean Stanley, in his book on Sinai and Palestine (chap. viii. s. 6), writes : "From these heights Abner in his flight from the Philistines, and *David in his flight from Absalom*, and the Israelites on their way to Babylon, and the Christian Jews of Pella, caught the last glimpse of their familiar mountains. There is one plaintive strain which sums up all these feelings, the 42nd Psalm. Its date and authorship are uncertain ; but the place is, beyond doubt, the hills beyond the Jordan, which always behold, as they are always beheld from, Western Palestine. As before the eyes of the exile, the hart or stag of the forests of Gilead panted after the fresh streams of water which there descend to the Jordan, so his soul panted after God, from whose presence he was shut out. The river, with its winding rapids, 'deep calling unto deep,' lay between him and his home ; thus they reminded the wanderer from his home in Israel of his banishment and solitude."

How beautiful is the aspiration which these first verses contain—the desire of the holy soul to be nearer

God—the reaching out of a devout heart towards its one only true great centre! “Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?” Surely there is here a direct reference to Him who said, “Whosoever thirsteth, let him come unto Me and drink.” “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* This He said of and to all of us; but there is one expression once used by Him of Himself, “Whose *meat* it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work,” which these first verses of the 42nd Psalm more especially should remind us of. Amid the seven sayings on the Cross, there is one related by S. John alone—the one word, as it is in the original, “I thirst.” And though the great Sufferer was at that moment, no doubt, parched with the fevered thirst arising from His great and intense suffering, both of body, mind, and soul—beginning with the agony in the garden, the repeated trials, the insults, buffeting, scourging, and bearing the cross which He had undergone, and now with hands and feet pierced by the nails, on which rested the whole weight of His

* S. John iv. 13, 14.

emaciated person—yet that word, "I thirst," is not to be interpreted as relating to that bodily and fevered thirst. Such was just the thought, and no more, of the crowd around the cross. They at once offered to His lips a sponge full of vinegar, or sour wine, whether it were done in mercy or in derision, and He refused it. But the Lord's thirst was the earnest desire of His soul for man's salvation, just about to be accomplished by His death—the great atonement for all sin. He thirsted to "see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied." He thirsted for the end which was close at hand—the redemption of man—for that immediate moment when, as we so often repeat, "Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." He thirsted "to bring many sons unto glory." He thirsted for the salvation of each one of us, giving Himself wholly for us, as He had come down from heaven to do.

And so, too, of us He has said, "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled;" meaning that they who in true earnestness of heart and life seek of God both righteousness here and salvation hereafter, they shall never be disappointed. And so amid the blessings promised in the divine book of the Revelation of S. John it is promised, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of

waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”*

My brethren, all who shall be saved must thus have in them some measure of this reaching forth of the soul and spirit unto God Who gave it. “As the hart desireth the water-brooks : so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God : when *shall* I come to appear before the presence of God ?” There must be in us, I say, some measure of this reaching forth of the soul unto God. The salvation of the soul, which is really the one great end we each have, or ought to have in view, will not drop down upon us like the gentle dew from heaven, coming, we know not how, unconsciously and without effort of any kind. It is true that God could, if He pleased, turn stones into bread, and raise up children unto Abraham out of the roadside stones we tread under foot. But it is not *so* that God deals with each of us. He has given us not only powers of mind and body, for the use of which He will one day call us to account, but He has given us a perfect free will of our own, so that we can choose evil or choose good : follow Him or rebel for a time in our weakness against Him who has made us, redeemed and sanctified us. His promise ever is, “Ask, and ye *shall* have ; seek, and ye *shall* find ; knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you ;” thus not having without asking, not finding without seeking, not entering in without

knocking. There are a hundred ways or more in which this great truth, the necessity of the soul reaching forth in us toward God, and His salvation is set before us. It is the pearl of great price, which, when we have once found, we must sell all that we have to obtain it. It is the good seed which is required to bring forth thirty-fold, or sixtyfold, or hundredfold of increase to Him ; or it is the sacrifice of the greatest treasure and gift we possess on earth, the cutting off of a right hand, the plucking out of a right eye, the excision of a right foot, if either of these cause thee to offend. Though the harvest of each year be altogether God's gift and bounty to man, yet must man labour and work and wait through winter snows and summer's sunny days, as though all were his doing and depended upon himself alone, instead of its being the case that our Father in heaven thus "crowneth the year with His goodness," and "giveth food to all flesh, because His mercy endureth for ever."

Brethren, I think these thoughts, and these first two verses of this 42nd Psalm, are very appropriate for our hearts to dwell upon to-day. In the order of the Christian year, and of our church services and festivals, this is our last Sunday. A week hence and we shall begin our Prayer Book order once more, and turn to the first collect of all in the book. True, it is not the world's reckoning of time, but it is the Church's mode. Her sun is the Sun of righteousness, as He rose

at Christmas to shine upon this earth; and so, as it were, we keep Advent as a sort of dawn foretelling of His coming, just as the early dawn foretells of the sun about to rise upon the earth. We have yet four Sundays to come before the sunrise of Christmas-day. Thus all our services are planned and arranged to help us all to reach forth unto God; to draw nearer unto Him; to prepare ourselves to come and stand, as one day we *must* do, whether prepared or not, before the living God.

On looking back through the fifty-two Sundays, and all the other festivals, holy days, and holy services of the seasons dying out with this day and week, how far can *we* truly say, speaking as it were to God Himself, Who reads our thoughts and hearts, "As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth *my* soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when *shall* I come to appear before the presence of God?" How blessed for us if we can truly say this to Him! blessed indeed we are, exactly in proportion as we can truly do so. How little can many of us take up such an exalted aspiration of soul upon our lips, and utter it with truth before God!

Brethren, let us each look back a little to the Sundays we have passed, and how we have passed them. Let us be at this moment like an Israelite of old, viewing from mount Hermon the last shades and outlines of the hills, so beloved by him, which stand

about Jerusalem ; let us be like Moses, viewing from the summit of mount Pisgah the road which he had passed, and the beautiful land spread out in the distance before him. It will do us good, brethren, thus to recall the past in all its good or evil. We may learn to do better. We may see our faults and shortcomings in some new light. We may reach forth unto higher and better things for the time to come, and strive to be better, and to grow in grace. And if "thou art full of heaviness, O my soul, and so disquieted within me, put thy trust in God, and yet thank Him who is thy help and thy God."

SERMON XXI.

New Year's Day.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me: and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling. And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness: and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God."

PSALM xliii. 3-6.

I HAVE already stated that this psalm originally formed one with the forty-second, and that it is one of the "Korah" psalms, to which family Samuel belonged, who are supposed to have formed at one time a religious association specially connected with the worship of God and the temple services, very much, we may say, as a well-organized choir now-a-days in our own churches. The latter words of my text occur twice in the preceding psalm, as well as here in the forty-third.

There seems to be some special appropriateness in these words on this day. The beginning of a New Year is to every one of us a great turning-point in life. A year's changes may be, but seldom are, very imperceptible to each of us in ourselves and all around us, or

they may come upon us in very distinct characters, *materially* changing our position, or state, or happiness in life, and this for all the rest of our days. Now it is a great proof of true faith in God, as our Father, and in Jesus Christ our Lord, to feel that He will order and overrule whatever happens to or about us for the best, and thus to cross the threshold of a new year so trusting in His care and goodness as neither to be over anxious nor inquisitive as to the future. Our Lord's words can never be repeated too often, nor more suitably than at this moment: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you." A year is a long period in the life of every one of us, yet so far from looking forward anxiously through it we are shut into far narrower limits by the words, "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Without such trust in God, we must ever have many anxious thoughts, which will force themselves upon us. None of us know in the least where or how we shall be a year hence, or who will be with us then of those with whom our daily life is passed now, whether separated or together, and separated only for a time, or by that irrevocable change which any hour awaits us all before long. Still it is not good or right that we should let our minds dwell overmuch upon what is to come. Saul desired, after God had departed from him, to know

what lay before him, and he was told what he desired, but it was that he would be slain on the morrow, and all Israel too, by the Philistines. Ahab again desired to know the result of his expedition against Ramoth-gilead, and the prophet was allowed to tell him that all Israel would be slain, and himself amongst the number. In the parable, the man who had stores enough gathered in and laid up for many years, and planned to pass his time in thoughtless self-indulgence, was told, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Thus it is for our good and for our truest happiness that God hides from our eyes all knowledge of the future. If things do look dark around any of us, and that is more or less the case with many at all times from one cause or other, let us remember these thrice-repeated words, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within?" Herein lies the remedy, "O put thy trust in God;" or as it is said in another psalm (37th), "Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good: dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thou in the Lord: and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

But let us not mistake what this trust in God really means; what a true trust is. It does not mean a blind committing ourselves to chance, in the hope that all will be well, live as we may, do as we like; neither

striving to do well, nor avoiding or resisting temptation. There is something akin in the opposite dispositions, as they are, of distrust and presumption. It was a temptation to *distrust* God, when Satan suggested to the holiest mind, "Turn these stones into bread." And on the other hand, it was a suggestion of *presuming* upon God's care when he afterwards said, "Cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: lest at any time thou cast Thy foot against a stone." To do so is not to trust God, but to tempt Him: to put His care and love *to the proof*, which would be inconsistent with a true trust in Him; just as if we have a sure confidence in a friend's goodness or rectitude, we should never, without being obliged to do so, put either to the proof.

And so that we may indeed be able to say to ourselves, "O put thy trust in God," we need to say first, as in the preceding verses it is written, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling. And that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness." There are two special ways in which God sends out His light and His truth that they may lead us. Externally, He gives us His holy word, contained in the book we call our "Bible," and His Church to interpret, explain, and apply that word to us. Internally, He gives us His most Holy Spirit, by Which we may apprehend His divine will, as

set forth in the Bible, and also are made able and disposed to follow and obey that will.

We require *both* of these aids in order to know God, and to do His will. Without the written word, if we had no Holy Scriptures, we should have no certainty of truth to rest upon; or if we had them, but no authority to guide us in the least as to their right meaning and interpretation, we should soon lapse into darkness and ignorance of God, and all that most nearly concerns our souls; just as we know all generations of men in all lands have ever done, who have either lost or have never had the written word or God's Church to fix and interpret that word.

And on the other hand, without the Holy Spirit's light and help, we have no desire in us to know God's will, much less to do it in all things. The Bible will be looked upon as but a common book; often it even stirs men up to hate the very words of it, if though a copy of it be in every man's hand; still there is no light within or grace of the Holy Spirit to make us love, understand, and follow its teaching. Truly the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation; but it is "through faith which is in Christ Jesus," and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," while at the same time the Holy Spirit illumines a man's mind, and opens the windows of his soul to receive, love, and follow its truth. Thus it is that S. Paul says to the Corinthians, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they

are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Here then, my Christian friends, is one great use of those ordinances of divine service and worship, which the psalmist desires in my text that he could but enjoy—God's dwelling and God's altar. One, but not the only object of coming to God's house is to hear *some* (and indeed each time it is *many*) portions of God's word, read aloud with the reverence which becomes it, and to have some more direct and personal explanation of it given us in the sermon. Reading some chapter by ourselves is by no means the same thing as hearing it read to us by others ; often the intonation of another throws quite a new light upon the passage. Then very few, if any of us, are able to apply it to ourselves, and to see its force and personal interest, as they can or ought whose office it is to be thus used as "instruments of God," for the conversion of sinners, and for the edification of God's faithful people. Besides, how many there are who cannot read at all ; and how many others who would never, from one year's end to another, do so unless they came to the public services of the Church. Thus it is so especially true as the psalmist exclaims, "Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor." God's house, built and maintained by others, is thus a special provision of God for those who are least able to help themselves to gain instruction, or know right from wrong.

Another thought which may suggest itself to us is this: If every man were left without help or guidance of any kind to judge and decide for himself "what is truth," there would certainly be in a little time no truth left in the world. One would believe what another man would reject altogether, till truth itself disappeared, and there was nothing left, as universally believed in, on which to build up a holy life. This is one special good of the Creeds, or summaries of the chief articles of our faith, drawn up by Church authority. In them are brought together the main points which are necessary for every one to hold and believe, that he may build up a spiritual house in his own soul for God to dwell in. And so too, while by some one great truth or other would be set aside, others perhaps of less importance in the scheme of salvation would be brought into undue prominence. We ought surely, out of a humble spirit, if we have it in us, to thank God that in many respects we have not thus to judge for ourselves; but through His goodness to receive the things which are surely to be believed, and so go on from strength to strength. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

But my text names not only God's "dwelling," but God's "altar." I would say, Does not this word strike upon some ears and hearts among us as one in which they at present have no share—no part? S. Paul says to the Hebrews, "We have an altar,"* which is sufficient

* Heb. xiii. 10.

to prove that Christians have an altar as truly since Christ died for us, as the Jews had before. It is there that we commemorate the sacrifice of the death of Christ, are made partakers of that sacrifice, and offer our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice unto Him, with the sacrifice also of praise and thanksgiving to God for our Redemption through His Blood.

My brethren, the beginning of a New Year is a time for us all to give some new and anxious thoughts to God and our own souls; and I am sure these subjects are both such as most of us have need to give more thought to, than is our habit now. I do not think there is that reverence for God's holy Word spread abroad in our hearts as in past generations before us. The very abundance of its possession by every one of us in every home has made it less esteemed, I fear, than once it was. Let not this be the case with ourselves. Let us renew and reawaken with a New Year our love for God's holy Word, reading it by ourselves, loving to hear it read aloud in God's house, and to have it explained to us, and applied to ourselves individually. And I would indeed that these words written of the first Christians were true of all and every one amongst ourselves—"On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together"—not to hear Paul, but—"to break bread"—incidentally to their assembling together—"Paul preached unto them."

SERMON XXII.

Past, present, and future Mercies of God.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old; how Thou hast driven out the heathen with Thy hand, and planted them in: how Thou hast destroyed the nations, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession through their own sword: neither was it their own arm that helped them; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour towards them."

PSALM xliv. 1-4.

THE expression here, so well known from the words being repeated in the suffrages of the Litany, "We heard with our ears, O God," is only a Hebrew mode of expressing the more clearly and certainly any fact. As when in the 35th Psalm we read, "We saw it with our eyes;" or in Acts vii. 34, God is made to say, "*I have seen, I have seen* the affliction of my people," it is very much the same as if the words stood, "I have surely seen and noticed the affliction of my people." By some this whole 44th Psalm has been supposed to belong to a later period than David's time, to whom most of the first seventy-two psalms, and many of those that follow, are attributed. Thus it has been supposed by some to refer especially to the great danger Jerusalem was in in the time of Hezekiah, when the

army of the Assyrians besieged it, and filled all the country round about, and Hezekiah sent to Isaiah to ask his prayers and his advice. And thus it has been attributed to Isaiah rather than to David; and if such a supposition is indeed true, we may then consider this 44th Psalm to have been the prayer of Isaiah on behalf of Hezekiah and Jerusalem in their distress. We know how soon and wonderfully that prayer *was* answered; for God sent forth an Angel, who then slew in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men of the Assyrian army, so that in the morning they were all dead corpses. But whether this was the occasion or not of this psalm, we may be quite sure that Israel would continually look back, under *any* peculiar circumstances and difficulties, to the wonders and the deliverances God had wrought for them in former generations of old time. It was but natural that they would look back in times of danger and trial, and think of and recount to others the great things God had done for His own people from time to time. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old." The great deliverance from Egypt was the one special circumstance to which the minds of all generations reverted again and again. Their whole history as a nation was founded upon *that*; and when we think of the preservation of Moses, of the burning bush, of the ten plagues of Egypt, ending with the death of the

first-born in *every* house; the pillar of cloud by day, of fire by night; the passage of the Red Sea by Israel in safety, with the destruction of Pharaoh and all his hosts; then the marvellous supply of food which fell each night for forty years from heaven, and of water out of the stony rock which was smitten—these great events would stand out in their nation's memory and records like the great features of a grand picture, which we look at and hardly notice the less important points in it. Thus in the 105th Psalm we have their history, beginning with Joseph: "He had sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold to be a bond-servant; whose feet they hurt in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul; until the time came that his cause was known: the word of the Lord tried him;" ending with this sentence, "And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness." So again in the very next psalm to that (106th) we find allusion again made to these old events in Israel's history: "Our fathers regarded not Thy wonders in Egypt, neither kept they Thy great goodness in remembrance: but were disobedient at the sea, even at the Red Sea. . . . He rebuked the sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the deep, as through a wilderness. . . . And they forgot God their Saviour, who had done so great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and fearful things by the Red Sea."

But, brethren, these things belong not to Israel only,

but to all the people of God of all times and all lands. And not only so, but there is a spiritual or Christian interpretation to be put upon all these old events, as both S. Paul and S. Peter state in their epistles; and besides all this, we have the daily mercies of God continued and multiplied around us during eighteen hundred years, since man's Redemption by Jesus Christ. True, Israel arose from one great forefather, Abraham, and spread and grew into a mighty nation, marvellously guided and marvellously preserved, till in the rejection of Christ their national existence was put an end to, and they became a people scattered and wandering over all lands, exiled from their own.

But how marvellous a history is the rise and spread of the Church of Christ! When the seed was first sown, it was the smallest of all seeds. Its Founder had been crucified, and all His first followers were persecuted and martyred one by one. Still, as the prophecy of Daniel foretold of the Church, "the stone cut out without hands has become a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." All other powers of this world, kings, nations, great statesmen, and great generals—men who in their generation have altered the face of the world again and again—they and all they have ever done have perished and passed away; but the one only Kingdom which survives them all, has been and will be the spiritual Kingdom on earth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The very exist-

ence of the Church of Christ to our day, dependent as it is on no powers of this world—almost safer and surer the more entirely it is independent of all fortuitous circumstances, as they may seem to our outward eyes—this is even a greater instance of God's wonderful works than the passage of the Red Sea and the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and their preservation through the barren and dry wilderness—a vast multitude of men, women, and children.

How often do we forget, how little do most of us think of, the blessings and wonders amid which we ourselves live, in which we share, by which we are surrounded ! It was our Lord's promise at an early period in His ministry "that many should come from the east and west, and from north and south, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;" and so we in the far west have for hundreds of years past enjoyed the blessings of Christianity, and from amongst ourselves are extending it throughout the whole vast continent of North America ; peopling Australia with a new but Christian race ; converting the islands of Melanesia and New Zealand to Christ ; breaking up all the old religions of India, and planting the standard of the cross in their stead ; opening up China ; and, still more marvellously, the whole continent of Africa is being penetrated by the white man, from north to south, from east to west alike.

What a marvellous destiny seems to lie before us as

a Christian nation, if we will but give ourselves, our prayers, and our alms, and work for the cause of Christ throughout the world ! What a token is all this of the fulness of the Gentiles being nearly come ! The history of the last fifty years has changed the face of the world *more* than five hundred years preceding our own times. If we are but true to Christ, and labour for Him, what may not our children say in generations to come of our times, and those coming on ! “ We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old.”

And there is indeed very great use in thus looking back to God’s dealings with His Church in times past. It is a great stay and support to our faith. When we think how God has preserved His Church and His truth in and through her ; how He has led her on, in and from one land to another and another ; when we see how, happen what may, His truth is preserved ; how, perish what may, His Church survives ; and how the heavenly leaven works and works, for long unobserved, it may be, but fermenting silently and surely ; when, for instance, we see over fifty bishops ruling over different sees in the United States of America, where there was *not one* bishop only a hundred years ago ; and, still more, when we contemplate the wonderful works of Church restoration and Church building, of schools and colleges, of hospitals and houses of mercy for the blind, for the deaf and dumb, for the sick and suffering, for penitents,

for every description and phase of human sorrow and want which have arisen in our own day—how well can we, and how may those who come after us exclaim, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old !”

The past mercies of God are an assurance to us of mercies to come. By looking back, we are strengthened in the faith and assurance of God’s overruling and ordering all things for the best to them that love Him ; so that we may do as the apostle invites us all to do, “Cast all your care upon Him ; for He careth for you.” It is a great point for all to keep alive in ourselves a good hope—to look forward, not despondingly, but thankfully and cheerfully. Hope comes like a bright ray of sunshine through the open window on a dark day. It makes a man look forward calmly and happily, and so it lessens very greatly the evils of life. How often do men and women go through great trials, long journeys, and long voyages, sustained throughout by the hope of reaching home at last, and being reunited to those they love ! Hope shortens distances, and spans over long intervals of time and space, when a man knows that in the end he will gain what he so earnestly desires to obtain. And though hope refers wholly to the future, yet it is built very much upon the past. It is the thought, “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done

in their time of old," which makes us feel oftentimes so much assurance of good things in store for us, if we keep a good heart in us, and try to love and please God in all things.

But the best and greatest thing of all to look back upon is the recollection of all that our dear Lord has done and suffered for us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave Himself for us." This is the greatest work of all that God has ever done for us, and for all men. The deliverances of Israel, to which every faithful Jew looked back continually, were but a type and shadow at best of the real deliverance from the condemnation and power of sin, wrought out for us all by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This have our fathers of old told us of—this we will hand down to those who come after us—the great things that God hath done for them that love Him. And let us each try if we cannot in *some* way so live unto God, and so serve Him in our generation, that our life on earth may prove a blessing to those who come after us. It is the promised blessing repeated at each Christian's grave side, not only that "they rest from their labours," which may be sweet to themselves, but that "their works do follow them." They are a blessing to others who succeed to their place and name. It is thus that we are reaping day by day the blessing and benefit of those who have loved and served God before our time; and if we do the same, we may be

equally a blessing to others who are to follow after us. Thus it is that this and every old Parish Church was the work of faithful men, long since laid to their rest. Their very names are forgotten amongst us. We have no record of who they were, or when they lived ; but here week by week we assemble ourselves, reaping the fruits of their faith, of their labours, of their goodness. Could we desire better for ourselves than that, when our day is past and over, a generation not yet born may rise up and call us blessed ; and in the enjoyment of benefits which we have been concerned in conferring upon them, and handing down to later times, may say of us, as Israel used to speak of their ancestors, " We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what Thou hast done in their time of old ; how Thou hast driven out the heathen with Thy hand, and planted them in : how Thou hast destroyed the nations, and cast them out. For they gat not the land in possession through their own sword, neither was it their own arm that helped them ; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them" ?

SERMON XXIII.

Much required to whom much is given.

"If we have forgotten the name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god, shall not God search it out? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart."—PSALM xliv. 21.

WHETHER this psalm be really one of David's, or, as some have thought, was composed by Isaiah, and that its references are to the great danger Jerusalem was in in the reign of Hezekiah, one thing is clear, and that is, that it was composed in *some* period of great national trouble and distress, arising, at least in part, from the nation's trust in God; for the words which immediately follow my text are these: "*For Thy sake* also are we killed all the day long, and are counted as sheep appointed to be slain. Up, Lord, why sleepest Thou? awake, and be not absent from us for ever. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our misery and trouble?" Now in all such times the mind of the thoughtful and pious Israelite would fix itself upon two principal reflections—one, the past mercies of God, and the wonders He had done for their nation in old time; the other was to trace out the cause

of their present sorrow and affliction in the sins of their times.

It is well for us always to bear in mind that there is a mysterious connection between sin and sorrow—between sin and sickness and death ; but in those days, national trouble, or individual sickness or suffering, was—immediately almost and very plainly—connected with sin. External punishment of some kind followed as a *matter of course* in those days upon sin and wickedness. For the most part, a forgetfulness of God or a lapse into idolatry brought on *national* chastisement, whereas *private* sins produced sickness and sorrows in individual homes. And though all this is very much changed to us, who live in the knowledge and certainty of a great day of Judgment to come, when all will be rewarded or punished according as their life on earth has been, and when every secret thing will be known and come abroad ; yet even now in numberless cases sin produces its own certain punishment even in this life, and most of the maladies which afflict individuals and private families may be traced to some form of vice and transgression of God's laws—some sin of the flesh in the present or in a past generation. All those hereditary diseases which are transmitted from father to son, and desolate so many homes, are for the most part clearly traceable to the sins and vices of some parent or forefather, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. Minor faults produce minor chas-

tisements ; but if we look back, how commonly can we even now trace a loss of health, and happiness, and position in the world, to the vice or profligacy of some notorious case. And so, let us remember, do the large number of transgressions which are punishable by the civil or criminal law of each land oftentimes affect and injure, by imprisonment or some harder sentence upon the offender, the position and welfare and happiness of many individuals. But with Israel of old it often wanted no intervention of man's to bring temporal pain and sorrow of some kind upon the offender, or on a family, or on the nation at large. So when the terrible distress arose to which this psalm alludes, it was but the most natural reflection for the pious Israelite to make—"If we have forgotten the name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange God, shall not God search it out ? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart."

We forget, perhaps, how very early in the world's history this rule of sorrow, pain, sickness, and death, following upon sin as its punishment, was manifested to all after generations. What was the origin of all sickness, trouble, sorrow, and death but the first sin of our first parents ? "God made not death in the beginning," but man was made in some sense to be immortal, designed apparently to be trained on earth for a quick and sure translation into the Kingdom of God above, and for the companionship of Angels. It was in

punishment for sin that the sentence went forth, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," and so too labour, and all those pains and sorrows which lead on to the fulfilment of that original sentence upon man's disobedience, all these arose out of the one first transgression of the Divine command. They did exactly what my text describes, they forgot the name of God, and lifted up their hands to one who was not *God*, but God's enemy. They listened to the suggestions of Satan, and so fell, and so were punished. And so too as they fell, as surely did God "search out" their sin; "for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart." "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." We must all know the inquiry then made, first of Adam, who laid the sin upon the woman; then of Eve, who laid the sin upon the serpent; but all in vain. Each in turn received their separate and distinct sentence from the eternal lips: labour ending in death fell upon Adam; the perpetual sorrows attending childbirth, as an ever present memorial of her sin upon the woman, and every mother to the end of time: and a transformation of the outward form of the serpent, with a perpetual enmity between man and the serpent race as *his* condemnation.

Thus it was that pain and sorrow came as a matter of course upon the sinner in the very first days of this

world. And though, as I say, in these Christian days the same rule still prevails very widely and very generally, yet it is not so invariably as it was in former ages. Why is this? Should we be right in thinking that God views sin more leniently now than He used to do? or is *its* character altered? or is it that He deals differently with *us* than with former generations?

Surely it is not so. The greater the grace and light we have in us, the greater becomes every transgression. And so the one great and only explanation of this which we can give lies in the fact, that to us it is very plainly again and again revealed that a Great Day is coming, altogether uncertain as to its time and nearness, when God will judge all, who have ever lived strictly, exactly, and impartially. Earlier ages had not this revelation of the Judgment to come, or at least very indistinctly. Many of those passages in the Old Testament in which God's judgment is spoken of, and He as the Judge, evidently refer only to *this* life, and nothing beyond. As when the prophet says: "When Thy *judgments* are in all the world, men will learn righteousness;" or in the Psalms: "Be Thou my judge, O Lord, for I have walked innocently;" "Judge me, O Lord my God, according to Thy Righteousness;" "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." All such passages in their original meaning are to be taken as referring to *this* life only, nothing beyond.

But to us, on the contrary, the Great Day of all is revealed in more or less plain terms again and again : " When the King shall sit upon His throne : and all nations shall be gathered before Him : and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." And so exact and strict an inquiry will this be, so true a revelation of each man's life on earth, that our Lord tells us, on the one hand, even the gift of a cup of cold water only to a little child in His name will then have its own separate and distinct reward and acknowledgment ; and, on the other hand, not only shall all our works, good or bad, be known and published, but " verily I say unto you, For *every idle* WORD that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment."

Brethren, " God has appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained ; of which He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." " I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." This no doubt is why many crimes and sins in our day go unpunished, and pass by as if forgotten in this world. Still how often does it happen in the records of every land that the most deep-laid, carefully-executed plans of wickedness are discovered, and one by one every artifice and every effort at concealment is rendered useless ; the tangled web of crime

is unravelled, and the sin and the sinner confronted by a revelation of each secret step by which he carried out his crime to its apparent successful termination.

"If we have forgotten the Name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god: shall not God search it out? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart." It may be, brethren, God's judgments will be all the more severe upon sins which have altogether escaped punishment in this life. Thus it is no proof of God's mercy for a crime or sin to go without punishment on earth; it would seem just the reverse. "Some men's sins" (says the apostle) "are open beforehand, going before to Judgment, and some men they follow after." Better is it to know and feel our guilt here, than to leave the whole account to be made up and expiated after death. Let us be sure of this, that one or both must come upon us. God may for a time spare us, like the husbandman in the parable, who pleaded for the fruit tree to remain one year longer, in the hope that by his exertions and attentions to it he might make it to bear fruit. Woe unto us, if we live our life in this world, and bring forth no fruit unto God, no fruit unto perfection: still worse if we have at the day of Judgment no account to give of our life on earth, but an unvarying tale of sins in thought, and word, and deed, with no redeeming points of light and goodness; none of that fervent charity among ourselves which we are told "shall cover a multitude of sins;" none of that love of

one another by which all men are to know them who are Christ's disciples. And surely, brethren, one great help to leading us on to a godly, holy, honest life, and one great help also to guard us against sin and temptation, is to have in our minds, as though it were written up before our eyes, just such a sentence as this in my text, "Shall not God search it out ? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart." We little realize the extreme *accuracy* of God's knowledge of us—how He reads our hearts through and through, how He hears each word we speak, and registers in His books our day by day life in this world. Thus it is that we pray to Him "to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the Inspiration of His Holy Spirit, because unto Him all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Him no secrets are hid." "If we have forgotten the Name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god, shall not God search it out ? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart."

SERMON XXIV.

Epiphany Season.

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : the sceptre of Thy Kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness : therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. The King's daughter is all glorious within : her clothing is of wrought gold."—PSALM xlv. 6, 7, 13.

THIS 45th is another of the "Korah" psalms. It is one of those specially selected for use on Christmas-day ; but we may see perhaps a special suitability in it also for this season of the Church's year when during the Epiphany we are commemorating the approach of the first Gentiles to Christ—a token of the future extension of God's grace and mercy to *all* people on earth. It is a difficult psalm to fix to any particular date or event. The idea throughout is a royal marriage, and so it has been supposed to refer to Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. All the verses down to the tenth are an address to the King ; then follows an address to the Queen, the Bride, to forget her own people and her father's house ; to leave them, as Rebecca left Syria, to become the wife of Isaac ; or as our Princess of Wales left her native land for

England, and our Princess Royal left England for Germany.

S. Paul expressly declares these sixth and seventh verses of this psalm to belong to Christ, and only to Him. Therefore there can be no mistake of their reference to the Messiah, nor of their Inspiration. And it is probably because so many words in this psalm are descriptive of a king setting out from his home or country that this psalm has been chosen for Christmas-day. Thus we find in it such expressions as these : "Thou art fairer than the children of men : full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever ;" "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty ;" "Good luck have Thou with Thine honour ;" "Ride on prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness ; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things." All which betoken the *setting out* of Him who is the subject of this psalm. And as the psalm proceeds, so increases the glory and greatness of the King ; just as it is said of Christ, "God hath greatly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name."

And so the principal subject of the whole psalm to us in these Christian times seems to be the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His Church, which should spread and grow ; so that instead of fathers thou shalt have children, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands, when "kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and

queens thy nuring mothers," according to the prophecy of Isaiah. We know how as Eve was taken out of Adam, so the Church has sprung from the Saviour. He is the Head, we are the separate members of His one body—the Church of all ages, of all lands, of all people. So our Lord Himself thus speaks of that oneness and unity: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing." So, in our order of service for the Solemnization of Matrimony, we are told by the Church "that it is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church." And this, as I have said, is exactly the idea which is kept up all through this 45th Psalm.

And as this great blessing to mankind began on Christmas-day, when our Lord Jesus Christ was born, and came amongst us, so the words "ride on" in this psalm especially remind us of the *growth* of the Church from this beginning; how the faith has spread over all lands; has been preserved through eighteen centuries already past, and will live and, we hope, grow "till the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as

the waters cover the seas," till "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

It is for this growth, and increase, and permanence of Faith and the Church which we so often pray for—perhaps without much thinking of the subject of our prayer—"Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." "O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech Thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that Thou wouldest be pleased to make Thy ways known upon earth, Thy saving health unto all nations." The proving of our own faith, our own growth in grace, and our future perfection, depend very much upon our desire and efforts, in any or every way, to spread the Gospel of Christ, and to enlarge His Church. Just as this psalm points us to the future, more than the past when it says, "Instead of thy *fathers* thou shalt have *children*, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands. I will remember Thy name from one generation to another: therefore shall the people give thanks unto Thee, world without end."

Here then we find throughout, under the figure of a royal marriage, first, the Glory of Christ: "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" next, the glory of the Church, hidden though it be from our eyes in this world: "The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold;" and, thirdly, an admonition to the Church to give herself up to Christ,

with the promise of her extension and enlargement if she does: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider: incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

A former bishop of this diocese comments thus upon the latter part of this psalm: "This seems to be the voice of God addressing the Church to the following effect: O thou whom I have begotten unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and whom I have called out of the world to become 'the Lamb's wife,' hearken diligently to my voice, and be obedient to my direction. Thou art entering into a new state; let old things pass away; regard no more thy connections with earth. Then shalt thou be truly acceptable and dear in His sight, who, having purchased and betrothed thee to Himself, claims thy whole heart, thy undivided love, and thy unlimited service and adoration. Her beauty, so greatly desired and delighted in by Messiah, is spiritual. It is the beauty of Holiness, and her clothing is the Righteousness of saints."

This then is an outline of what appears to be the right interpretation of a very difficult psalm, but one to which S. Paul bears testimony so expressly as to its divine inspiration. In it is represented the spiritual oneness which subsists betwixt Christ and His Church, resulting at last, as it is to do, in Glory, which we can in no wise picture to ourselves. Brethren, it is a great and blessed thing for us here to be allowed in any way

to take part in Christ's work in the world, and to glorify His name. It is to this that we should all give some time and care and thought day by day, exercising where we can an influence for good; never being weary of well-doing, nor ceasing to offer up our prayers for the good and salvation of all men.

Not to have any part in this work, is to be as salt which has lost its savour, and so is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot. And few of us know perhaps how much good lies in the power of every one of us, if we will but give ourselves heartily to the work of Christ in this world. True, we may seldom, or perhaps never, *see* with our own eyes the work we have done, and set our hearts upon. "One soweth, and another reapeth." Who sees the growth of the seed below the surface of the earth which man sowed weeks or, it may be, months ago? In due time we do see the fields becoming green in even rows, and in a few months the corn turning to its golden hue of ripeness. So is the progress of spiritual things in God's higher world. For a moment our eyes are holden, that we see no result. Faith is thus proved; patience and permanence follow one another. Though men often despise the people, ways, and laws of God in our time, so did they even in and to the Lord Himself; and yet we know how true it is more and more, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

Dives looked down, without a moment's commiseration

even, upon Lazarus lying at his gate full of sores ; yet a day very soon came when Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, while Dives passed into his state of perpetual torment. So it matters not what men think or say of us, either as individuals or as part of Christ's body, the Church, so that we but endeavour to grow in grace through union with Christ by prayer and sacraments ; to increase in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent.

True indeed "the King's daughter is all glorious within." The glory of the saints is hidden from our eyes. As our Lord was in the days of His humiliation compared with the glory of the Transfiguration, so are we now, compared to what we shall be, or at least may be. So says S. John : "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is."

It is good for us to fix our minds upon such great promises as these. There is often much to cast us down now. The sad divisions of Christendom give ample occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. They talk, and plan, and agitate how to injure the Church of Christ, to cripple her energies, and to stop her growth and spread. These things are a terrible drawback in our day. It is so sure a truth our Lord declared, "A house divided against itself falleth ; a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desola-

tion." Let us take heed that we ourselves do in no way promote such a state of things. Rather, brethren, let us live in unity, and in brotherly love one towards another, each seeking the other's good, and rejoicing to share in one another's happiness or sorrow. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another." This is our standard, the rule left us to measure others by, and be measured by ourselves.

What are we that He should ever deign to use *us* for His own glory? But so it is, and we may well rejoice and be glad in it, ever looking unto that bright day when "the righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father;" for "the King's daughter is all glorious within."

SERMON XXV.

It fell not; for it was founded upon a Rock.'

"God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof rage and swell, and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same."—PSALM xli. 1-3.

THE psalm preceding this represents the Church as the Bride of Christ; His love for her; and her extension far and wide. "Instead of thy *fathers*" (it says) "thou shalt have *children*, whom thou mayest make princes in all lands."

This 46th Psalm represents *the safety and perpetuity* of the Church under all outward trials and afflictions. Just as our Lord has declared, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Placed as it is amongst the first seventy-two psalms, we should naturally call this more especially a psalm of David. And though David's own life affords ample occasions to which the words of this psalm may well seem to refer, it appears to have more especial reference to the times of Hezekiah, and God's deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib,

king of Assyria. There are several expressions in this psalm which connect it with that event in a peculiar degree. Thus the psalm says, "God shall help her, and that right early," or "when the morning dawns." So in 2 Kings xix. 35, we are told, "The angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand : and when they arose *early in the morning*, behold, they were all dead corpses." Then the psalm says : "He breaketh the bow . . . and burneth the chariot in the fire." It was in the use of the bow that the Assyrians especially excelled ; and the particular boast of Sennacherib was, "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the heights of the mountains." * Again the psalm says : "Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." So this was the prayer of Hezekiah : "Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save us out of his hand, that *all the kingdoms of the earth* may know that Thou art God, even Thou alone." And in 2 Chron. xxxii. 23, we are told that Hezekiah "was magnified in the sight of *all nations*." Still, though there seem such especial connection in the words of this psalm with the reign of Hezekiah, this need not have been the original or only occasion to which it belongs. There are many parts of God's word which have a double reference or meaning, combining two events in one, as our Lord's

* 2 Kings xix. 23.

words on the mount of Olives refer evidently to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, but also to the end of the world. Yet there are very few periods in the history of any land, or in the lives of individuals amongst us, where we may not find a great support and stay to our faith in God by a devout use of this psalm.

In these days of wars and rumours of wars, when all nations are armed to the teeth as never before in the world's history; in the numberless revolutions and public disturbances of our times; in days which seem never free, in one quarter or another, from famines, or pestilences, or outward troubles of one kind or other; in the bitter discussions which go on between individuals, or various bodies of professing Christians; when here, and then there, the world rises up against the Church, what a consolation for godly people to turn to this great truth, "*God* is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear." "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early." "The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge." Such words help to prove the truth of what the prophet declares: "Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, whose heart is stayed on Thee." Whether we look at ourselves as a Church, as a nation, or as individuals, its words alike come home to us. They remind us very much of the 2nd Psalm, in which is

described the folly and uselessness of sinful men contending with God ; because just as the Resurrection was the first great result of the Cross, or as the Angel in one night set Hezekiah free, so God can ever bring to nought the devices of sinful men, and turn evil into good, and in each individual case "make all things work together for good to them that love Him."

Of the Church as a body we know at all times "God is in the midst of HER." It is God's presence which purifies, edifies, preserves, and extends the Church from one generation to another. It is the fulfilment, we know, of our Lord's prayer—"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you *for ever* ; even the Spirit of truth ; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be *in* you ;" and these words, "I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." It is this which above all else separates the Christian from Jew or Gentile. There is a great spiritual power bestowed upon the Church of Christ, pervading all lands, consecrating every soul wherein He is to God. It is the seed of immortality, the heavenly beginning and support of the Resurrection in each of us unto eternal life, of which the eyes of men see nothing but its work and effect—the very condemnation of him who, being called of God, yet lives in sin, because his body has become "the Temple of the Holy Ghost." This is the salt

which preserves the Church as a body, and individual members of it, from corruption and failing. It is the greatest security of all against sin, if a man but know and feel, when a temptation comes upon him, that his body is indeed "the temple of the Holy Ghost; which is in Him;" and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." We no more understand how this union is effected or exists than we understand the union between body and soul in each of us, or how the eternal Godhead existed in our Lord Jesus Christ *with* the perfection of man's estate in body and soul. But things that we can see or explain require no faith; for "faith is the evidence of things NOT seen, the substance of things hoped for." In Heaven there is, and there will be, no faith, because all there is clear, and known, and seen. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And in immediate connection with this subject is the presence of Christ and the Holy Ghost, in and by means of the holy Sacraments. We do not now see, as the apostles did, the Holy Ghost descend from Heaven, as at our Lord's baptism, in the form of a Dove; nor do "cloven tongues like as of fire" visibly sit upon the head of each of us; but for all that, the words of the Baptist are true to all: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." And still more. In the other holy Sacrament, which we are about to celebrate once more, without any change in their natural elementary

nature (for that would *contradict* our very senses and perception), we know by faith that these words are for ever true in some way above our explaining or understanding: "This *is* my Body: this *is* my Blood." "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man, and drink His Blood, ye have no Life in you." "This is the Bread of life: whoso eateth of this Bread shall live for ever." These are all subjects which exercise, and so *prove* and test, a man's faith. When Nicodemus asked of our Lord, "How can these things be?" and the Jews, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" *in neither case was any explanation vouchsafed to the inquirers.* They are presented as bare facts, attested by God to be great and important truths affecting each man's salvation; but we are left to believe them or not without compulsion; only let us all remember this, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If we cannot trust God's word—and that is, I fear, the case with many who are not in the least aware that it is so with them—then we have no signs from heaven to look for, in hope of bringing us to the truth; but a man may be allowed to slumber on, like the five foolish virgins, who, when they did wake up at last, it was at the bridegroom's presence, and when He had entered in, the door was shut, and they not being ready were for ever excluded.

Here then, in this psalm, we have the great declaration of the Emmanuel—"God with us." "The *Lord* of

hosts *is with us* ;” the greatest and most blessed truth which this world has ever known. Its continuation is by the presence and gift of the Holy Ghost, a gift never to be withdrawn so long as this world lasts. Christ speaks of what is done to His ministers, or to little children, or to the poor, as done unto Himself: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

Now do let us try to believe and feel how true this blessed promise is, and let us go and work on its assurance. The cross has brought us Redemption and Salvation, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit alone which can give us strength to overcome sin and live unto God. Go and live daily in this thought—“The Lord of hosts *is with us*.” Its fulfilment in ever-increasing truth and power should be one special subject of our prayers; for “if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Father, which is in Heaven, give the Holy Spirit *to them that ASK Him*?” This is the only sure way for any man to grow in grace, and to go on, as we all have need to do, “from strength to strength.” It is not often, if ever, that God will let us know what advance we have really made while His work is being perfected in us. The greatest saints have ever been the most humble, and least conscious of any excellence in themselves. But though neither they, nor it may be *we*, see all the grace that is going forward in them, still God’s eye sees it, “to

Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid."

My brethren, let us seek to excel more and more in all gifts of the Holy Ghost; for this let us pray, let us wait, and let us work. This is the way of perfection, this will be the measure of our glory in the life to come. Of Stephen it is said three times over, in the few verses which speak of him, that he was "full of the Holy Ghost." True it was his lot to lay down his life for Christ, and to pass away from sight by a sudden and cruel death; but to his eyes, even on earth, Heaven was opened, and he saw "the Son of man standing at the Right Hand of God." If so, why should we ever fear for ourselves, or for the Church as a body? "God is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear." "The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge." Vain are the efforts of sinful men to hinder God's work in His Church. They toss themselves, like the angry waves, upon the fragile shore of sand. They may "stretch forth their hand to vex certain of the Church," but the guilty arm falls powerless, like the withered hand of Jeroboam. Of old persecutions were God's way of *spreading* the faith, till it became a proverb amongst Christians, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The persecuted "went everywhere preaching the word." So let us feel this assurance in ourselves, to which this psalm calls us: "I am persuaded, that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

SERMON XXVI.

King over all blessed for ever.

"God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trump. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God: O sing praises, sing praises unto our King. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."—PSALM xlvii. 5-7.

THESE words explain to us at once why this psalm is one of those specially appointed for our use in Church on Ascension Day. There is no other person, or time, or event, except the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven, that we know of, to which these words can well be applied. The only other occasions to which they have ever been supposed to have reference are the removal of the Ark up mount Zion, to which the 24th Psalm especially relates, and to the Rapture of Elijah to Heaven in a chariot of fire. But then to this last event the term "God" is wholly inapplicable, while in the former we must by "God" understand "the Ark of God;" that symbol, as indeed it was, of the Divine Presence which was carried on the shoulders of the Levites from place to place, and finally up mount Zion. This reference would directly connect this 47th Psalm

with the 24th and the 68th, the latter of which psalms it does resemble in many expressions common to both.

But supposing this to have been the original application of this 47th Psalm, yet it is certainly not its highest and best, nor its most literal meaning, nor its most apparent reference. . It can be really only a prophetic declaration of our Saviour's return to Heaven after He had fulfilled His course on earth. The psalmist here sees, by the power of God upon him, that great future event to his great Descendant, according to the flesh, as though it had already happened; and he at once proceeds to speak of the spread of the Gospel over all lands, of Christ our Lord's reigning over the heathen, and of the people (that is, the Gentiles) being joined by faith in Christ unto the people of the God of Abraham. The ascension was and is the only occasion when it could be truly said, "God is gone up."

We often read of God coming *down* from heaven, and we read of God appearing in one form or in one way or another to holy men of old upon earth, such as the visions granted to Abraham, and the burning bush, and the voice which proceeded out of it to Moses, the presence of the angel of the covenant, or other manifestations to various prophets. But this psalm speaks not of God's coming *down*, but of His going up; and this can, so far as we know, refer to no *other* time or event than that of which S. Luke tells us: "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His

hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." The very words which follow this account of our Lord's ascension into heaven correspond very closely with the words of this 47th Psalm. There is a tone of great joyfulness about it. It begins with these words: "O clap your hands together, all ye people: O sing unto God with the voice of melody. O sing praises, sing praises unto our God: O sing praises, sing praises unto our King. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Just so S. Luke, to whom we chiefly owe what we know of the ascension, tells us how the eleven Apostles were filled with joy, and praised and blessed God for our Lord's glorious Ascension. His words are: "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." *

All sorrow and fear disappeared. While our Lord was yet with them, we read of their "sleeping for sorrow." We read of His saying to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are *sad*?" But from the moment that He had left them altogether, all feeling of that kind disappeared. There is no more fear, no more sadness, no more doubt or hesitation. They are not afraid to face the very men

* S. Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

who had so lately crucified the Lord, proclaiming to them and to all men His Resurrection from the dead.

And as with them, so with all of us—a sense of joy in believing, a special inward but sure happiness, derived from a sincere devotion and dedication of ourselves and our hearts to Christ as our Master, is a special, but it is an *advanced* gift of the Holy Ghost. In the religious life many, if not all of us, are like men walking tenderly upon ice, full of fears lest we may slip and fall, or the ice break beneath our feet; but after a time all fear of that kind will disappear in the faithful service of Christ, and we may walk securely and confidently, where at first we were afraid to venture. Joy and peace in believing is, I say, one of the sure results of a true faith and love and service of Christ; just as S. Paul heads the list of the fruits of the Spirit with these, “Love, joy, peace.”*

When any one's soul is first awakened to a more true and lively sense of religion, it is often filled with doubts and fears of one kind or other. He doubts his own sincerity and his own steadfastness, or “what is truth,” and what is right and what is wrong. Though Israel be led by Saul, whom God had chosen as their leader, yet they followed him “trembling.” So were the apostles in their great hour of trial timid and fearful; but no sooner is the Ascension past than the change in them is most remarkable. They court

* Gal. v. 22.

suffering and publicity where before they would have shrunk from it; and on the very first stroke of persecution, we read, "They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name's sake." But it was exactly thus our Lord had promised: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you." Let us remember this. One sure result of our faith and love to Christ is to be in due time joy, and happiness, and peace in believing; that "peace which passeth all understanding," from the assurance that we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; that God is working in us of His good will and pleasure, and that we are fellow-workers with God. Let not any of us expect this sense of inward joy and peace at the very *beginning* of a religious life. It is a long process which every flower passes through before it shows itself in all its beauty of colour, perfection, and sweetness. But it is one certain result, sooner or later, of a holy life, that we shall have in us this "joy in the Holy Ghost." It is sure to come; it is sure to follow; only not immediately, not at first. This is one reason why many fall away. They begin well; but they hope to be perfected at the very commencement of their career. They expect to reach the end of their journey as it were by one stride, or a day's progress; and not finding this to be the case with themselves, they fall away. It is ever true, "Many are called, but few chosen." Seed

sown on a rock may spring up and grow ; but as soon as the sun shines upon it, it withers away, because it lacks moisture, and has no deepness of earth. And no doubt this is why the Apostles so often inculcate patience upon all. "Add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue patience," says S. Peter. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and later rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts," says S. James. S. Paul also uses the word patience again and again in his epistles.

Praise then to God is really the expression of joy and peace in believing, and grows in us as we ourselves grow in grace. To offer praise to God is the highest and best reason of all for coming to Church. No doubt, if some of us were asked why we meet together in Church, we should give some such reasons as these—that we come to pray to Almighty God for what we want ; or we come to confess our sins, and pray for their forgiveness ; or we come to hear God's Word, and to learn our duty better by listening to sermons and expositions of Holy Scripture ; but no one of these reasons is the highest and best reason of all. The highest and best object for coming to Church is *to worship Almighty God for what He is in Himself* ; to offer up praise, and adoration, and thanksgiving to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; above all, to praise God

and Christ the Saviour of all for the Redemption of the world through His Blood, and for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Praise may be called "the admiration" of God for what He is in Himself, and has done for us. Our own selfish wants and needs may follow ; but they are not the *first* thing to be thought of. Thus it is the Cross, and the Resurrection, and the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven, and the gift of the Holy Ghost which followed, which should especially draw Christian people together into the House of God.

And thus it is, brethren, that the Holy Sacrament is the one special way which Christ Himself has instituted for us *all* to commemorate His death and passion for us, and to show forth our thankfulness for the same ; it is this which should be the principal, the highest and best reason of all which brings us together within these holy walls. "O sing praises, sing praises unto our God : O sing praises, sing praises unto our King." This is to do as the Angels do around the great Throne in Heaven. There the Hymn never ceases ; there no shadows of evening shut in the day, and no night spreads its curtain, as it does over us. Praise is the highest kind of prayer. It is to forget ourselves in God. It is, as I have said, to worship God as He is in Himself, and for what He has done for us ; and not for what we hope for, or would desire and want for ourselves. In Heaven there are no wants to be supplied, no sins to be forgiven, no dangers to be saved

from, no pains to be removed, or tears to be dried up; and so what we know of worship and service in Heaven consists in acts of adoration and praise, and the perpetual hymn of "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and honour, and glory, and blessing, for ever and ever." Poor and feeble at best can our praises be here. As yet we see but through a glass darkly; there *they* see face to face.

Still let us try to begin on earth what is to be perfected in us and by us in Heaven. Let us keep before our minds the thought of Christ's Assumption to the Right Hand of God, and trying to be like Him, and to do His will, and to follow His steps, pray, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom." "O sing praises, sing praises unto our God: O sing praises, sing praises unto our King."

SERMON X·XVII.

The Pentecostal Gift.

*"We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple.
For this God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our Guide unto
death."*—PSALM xlviii. 8, 13.

THIS 48th Psalm is the first of the special psalms selected for our use in Church on Whit-Sunday. From this we may gather assuredly that it is especially understood by the Church to refer to that greatest gift of all to man—the gift of the Holy Ghost. In this light this psalm speaks to us of the beauty of the Church from the sacred Presence of the Spirit dwelling in her; it speaks of the power of the Church to subdue the disobedient hearts and wills of sinful men to her rules of life, through this Presence of the Spirit; and it speaks of the abiding and enduring nature of this blessed Gift, given, as it was, never to be withdrawn, but to sanctify and pervade all faithful souls, and lead them on safe through the temptations of this world into the haven of everlasting rest and peace. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our Guide unto death."

We know not upon what occasion this psalm was originally composed, but there is one period in the sacred history when it is supposed to have been used, if not for the first time. The account is contained in the 2nd Chron. xx. Jehoshaphat was king, and Jerusalem was besieged by the children of Moab and Ammon and others. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord; and Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and there prayed for God's help against his numerous enemies by whom he was surrounded. And God heard him, and set them one against another, so that every one helped to destroy another. The chapter ends with the account of the king's ships made in Ezion-gaber, but were broken, that they could not go to Tarshish.

Now to all this we find a special reference in this psalm. There is first the beauty of Jerusalem, the pride of Israel. "The hill of Zion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth." Then we have the approach and defeat of her combined enemies. "Lo, the kings of the earth are gathered, and gone by together. They marvelled to see such things: they were astonished, and suddenly cast down." Then we have the destruction of ships at sea just as that chapter relates it: "Thou shalt break the ships of the sea through the east wind." Then we have Jehoshaphat and the people coming together before God in their distress into His temple, as that

chapter describes their doing: "We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple." Then in that chapter we have a beautiful description of the people setting forth against their enemies. "Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth for ever." And when on their return they blessed the Lord, and went again to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies, "They came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the House of the Lord." Thus we can well understand how applicable these words of this psalm would be on that occasion: "Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, in the city of our God, even upon His holy hill. O God, according to Thy name, so is Thy praise unto the world's end: Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let the mount Zion rejoice, and the daughter of Judah be glad, because of Thy Judgments." It is very remarkable thus to notice the coincidence between this chapter in the history of Jerusalem, and the words of this psalm.

There may have been other occasions, such as Jerusalem's deliverance in the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah,

when this psalm may equally as well have been used, but none that we know of more exactly in accordance with the words of it.

Still this would be a small matter now to us, except as a good example for the imitation of all people in times of war or danger, if this were all. We must remember that Israel throughout their history, even in many minute particulars, are a type of the true Israel of God in all times, the people chosen of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Just as, *e.g.*, we have S. Paul giving a spiritual and Christian interpretation to the passage of the Red Sea (as indeed S. Peter does also), and other events in their journey out of Egypt towards the promised land, when he says, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. . . . Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."

In like manner the devout mind of the Christian may trace out innumerable facts which connect the history of Israel of old with that of God's Church to the end of time, when the great day of all will overtake this world, as the flood in the days of Noah, and

as the fire from ~~Heaven~~ which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is exactly in this way that this psalm is evidently *intended* to be used by us, on Whit-Sunday at least. Our Zion is not like Jerusalem of old, a material city built upon a hill, but it is the spiritual city of God, in which God's Temple is one "not made with hands," but built of living stones, even the hearts of faithful people, which, though they be so many, yet, like the many members we each have in one body, He makes all to be one Temple under one Head, Jesus Christ our Lord, through "one faith, one baptism, one Lord, one hope, one God and Father of all."

Day by day, like the leaves falling to the ground in autumn, certain members of this great spiritual body drop off, and pass away, and are lost to sight, though it may be that they are still "to memory dear;" but then there is an Eternal Spring-time ever going on to compensate for this Autumn of falling leaves, so that the Church is never lost, the truth of God never fails, the Spirit of God is never withdrawn. The powers of this old world, in the persons, and words, and efforts of sinful men, may rise up and threaten the very existence of the Church of God, or of His truth entrusted to her charge, and deposited with her. They may gather around her, like the armies of Moab and Ammon round Jerusalem in the days of Jehoshaphat; but no portion of the Church, as a Church, ever fails, though her mem-

bers may change, provided she is but true to God and His truth. "Like as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God : God upholdeth the same for ever. We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple." Though a Joseph be seized, and sold as a bondservant, yet may he become ruler over all the land of Egypt, and the Preserver of the chosen race. Though a Moses be cast out, and drifting down the stream, yet he may be found by a Daughter of Pharaoh, and be brought up as the King's son for a still higher destiny in later times. David may be but a youth, and the youngest of seven sons, but he may even then lay the foundation of a future throne, and be the Progenitor of man's great Benefactor and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it is that God so often brings good out of evil, and frustrates the designs of sinful men, and makes the weakest and humblest of men to be His chosen instrument for the highest and greatest ends He has in view. As the apostle says, "He makes weak things to confound the things that are mighty; and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

Now why and how is this? It is the power of the Spirit of God working in and by any of us which produces results oftentimes so far beyond all that we could expect or hope for. It is a promise as old as Moses, that God "will shew mercy unto thousands in them that love Him, as well as visit the iniquity of fathers upon the

children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him." It was to S. Paul's thrice-repeated prayer for relief that the message came at last, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

This special power for good which holy and devout men have and exercise in the Church of God, oftentimes reversing the designs and intentions of the world, began in its present fulness from the hour of our redemption from sin and death. The Cross triumphed when to the world's eyes the Lord's life and work seemed passed and gone, and to have failed. The Resurrection arose out of death, and life from the dead. Then began to be fulfilled the saying, "And I, *if I be lifted up*, will draw all men unto Me." Then *came* the Ascension, and after that, the gift of Pentecost, the renewing grace which should abide in the Church for ever, the source of all holiness and of all good works, when God came down to dwell in men; and "this God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our guide unto death."

My brethren, we inherit and we possess, each of us in our separate degree, but all of us in *some* measure, that blessed gift of the Spirit which this psalm is used on Whit-Sunday to celebrate and keep in mind. It is not that we all have the *same* gifts of the Spirit, or all of us in the same measure; but all of us have *some* portion of that Presence within us, or we do not belong to

Christ at all. It is the greatest treasure of all we can ever possess on earth, yet it is promised without stint to all who will. It is too a treasure which, unlike those of earth, never wastes, but grows in the using; it is the one pound which gains ten pounds in one, five in another, but one only in a third; but which, if we keep it wrapt up or buried in the earth, unused and unemployed, will, by its very rust and saving, condemn the unfaithful and unprofitable possessor of it.

Let us ever remember that "the gift of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." It is bestowed upon us for our ever-increasing sanctification of heart and life; it is given us to do good to others, some in one way, some in another, but all of us in some way: it is not only to preserve us from sin, and help us to triumph over every temptation, but it is to make each of us in our own separate degree to be as salt in the earth, savouring all around it by its saltiness, or as a shining light in a dark place. I would say to you, Let us all learn more and more both to treasure this gift, and to use it. The continual remembrance of our possession of it will be the greatest security that we can have against sin, and the most sure way of increasing it, to use it and exercise it, imparting to others of that gift of which we, having so freely and undeservedly received, should as freely give.

It is for this that we should make our humble prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, both that we may our-

selves grow in grace, and in some way or other be fellow-workers with God in this world which He came down from heaven to redeem. Let us pray Him to revive His work in our own souls by His Holy Spirit, to bless our little good, and to turn our evil into good. And just as the Eleven were all of one accord in one place when the holy gift was first of all bestowed, so is it in this place, when two or three are gathered together in His name, that we can most truly say, "We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple." It is in united prayer and frequent sacraments that we draw nigh unto God, and feel more and more how true and blessed are the last words of this Pentecostal psalm: "This God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our guide unto death."

SERMON XXVIII.

Safe with God.

"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me."—PSALM xlix. 15.

I POINTED out the particular occasion on which the last psalm before this may well be supposed to have been used; viz., in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the combined armies of Moab and Ammon in the reign of Jehoshaphat, as described in 2 Chronicles xx. That psalm is a song of thanksgiving to God for a great national deliverance. It ends with the faithful determination, "This God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our guide unto death."

Now this last word "death" is really the key to this next psalm. As the last relates to a great *national* deliverance, this relates to the greatest of all changes that can happen to us personally and individually. It begins with calling upon all men to attend to it; for all are equally concerned in it. "Hear this," it says, "all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: both high and low, rich and poor, together." The question for you all to consider and attend to is this, How

can all these children of Adam be delivered from death and its consequences? Thus the subject of the last psalm, which concerned the Jews only, has grown here into one in which all are alike interested. Can any human power, wealth, or greatness deliver a soul from death? "There *be* some that put their trust in their goods, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. But no man may deliver his brother from death, nor make agreement unto God for him; for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever." The history of Job forms an excellent commentary on this psalm. Job was an instance of one who trusted in God faithfully; who went through the temptations of wealth and high position at one time, and then of extreme sorrow, poverty, pain, and degradation afterwards; and then again had a return to all his former plenty and prosperity; and in all conditions alike, whether exalted or made low, whether sorrowful or rejoicing, retained his integrity and trust in God, and, though tried, was not disappointed. He was one of whom we might truly say, in words which occur very nearly the same twice over in this psalm: "Man being in honour continueth not, but is like unto the beasts that perish."

S. Augustine enters largely into the illustration afforded of this psalm by our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus. There we find, as the psalm says, no riches could deliver the owner of them from death,

and even after death, Lazarus, though in paradise with Abraham, and heard the cry of Dives, still had no power to help him, or to assuage his pressing want. "Between us and you there is a great Gulf fixed, which no man can pass." And so we find our Lord telling us, very much as this psalm does throughout, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." The psalm says: "Wise men" (that is, holy and good men; for to be good and holy is the only true wisdom) "die and perish, like as do the ignorant and foolish, and leave their riches for others." And our Lord, after giving His own illustration of the same great truth, says: "So is he who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And yet, brethren, in the midst of all prosperity and abundance of all things, how sad and common is the temptation for the possessor both to forget God, and in the contemplation of themselves to think that "their houses shall continue for ever, and that their dwelling-place shall endure from one generation to another, and call the lands after their own names. Nevertheless" (is the repetition of warning, which reads like an explanation of the whole of this psalm) "man being in honour abideth not: he is like unto the beasts that perish." One by one we see, even within our own memory and times, the best, and greatest, and noblest of earth pass away and descend into the grave, and are soon forgotten, or nearly so. Some twenty years have scarcely

passed since we lost our great countryman—great in peaceful influence as in war—the Duke of Wellington, a name which once filled every tongue from day to day ; and nine years only later we lost the great and good Prince Consort of England, in the prime of his life and usefulness ; yet even now how seldom comparatively do either of those names, so familiar as they once were to all, occur to the minds and memory of most of us !

Another generation rises up “which knows not Joseph ;” and as time passes away those great names, so dear and familiar as they once were to our land, will be but seldom repeated or referred to. We cannot make the dead to live in the fresh and new memories of the world. But so is the way of this world, “Man cometh up, and is cut down like a flower ; He fleeth away, and never continueth in one stay.” The longest-lived memories on earth are of those who in their generation have lived not for themselves, but for others ; not for this world, but for God, and the life with Him beyond the grave. “Their works do follow them.” Even though no name attach itself to their works, yet, like the nameless founders and builders of our ten thousand ancient Parish Churches, round which each Parish clusters, the works themselves remain in their infinite blessings to a thousand generations.

And is there not in such thoughts as these a great consolation for us all ? Though we be unknown, unnoticed, and pass our life forgotten by the great world

in which we live, yet what we do for God may cause future generations to rise up and call us blessed, though they know nothing of those to whom their gratitude is due. In a quiet country parish like this, in which you and I, my friends, are passing away our earthly life, many or most of us unknown beyond a mile or two from where we live, no one of us fills any space in the eyes, or hearts, or thoughts of the great world beyond us; no "lands are called after our names;" we shall probably pass away like so many of our companions and neighbours have already done before us, and shall cause little or no thought or attention in yielding our place and calling to others after us. A short record of our name and age may be all at most that will bear testimony to what we were, and what we have been here, and what we have done.

But what matters it how little those next after us may take account of us, if it can but be truly written over our graves, "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saint;" or, "He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever." Who records on earth the little daily acts of goodness of each good Samaritan? Who writes down the giver of each cup of cold water to a little child, simply as an act done for Christ? Yet though man passes by such small things, God, Who is so great, does not. He has minute records of every heart, and of all such acts of devotion; and "He Who seeth in secret,

will reward thee openly." So even in this way the words of my text from this 49th Psalm become true: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for He shall receive me." Though the grave obliterates the greatest names in history, dwarfs into nothing the best and noblest records of an earthly life, yet God does not forget. They live unto Him. They will hear said to them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

This verse of my text is one of those many sentences which each true Christian may have written at the head of his grave. They were true of Christ Himself, and they belong to each of His faithful people. He raised Himself by His own power as God from the tomb. "I have power," He said, "to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." His human soul was not left in Hell—the hidden place, the place of departed spirits—neither did His human flesh see corruption; the morning of the third day saw Him restored by His own power to a New Life: the form that was *crucified* was unmistakable in its identity, though made deathless, and having properties which it had not before, nor have we as yet. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

For in that He died, He died unto sin once : but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And all this He is, not in and for Himself alone, but is become "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." "Christ in us [is] our hope of glory." If we be one with Him, one with Him by faith on our part, and by sacraments, as the secret channels of His grace on His, then because He lives, we shall live also. "I am the Bread of life." "This is that Bread which came down from Heaven : not as your fathers did eat Manna, and are dead : he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever."

Brethren, these are living words of Christ Himself, who cannot err or deceive. It is through Him that we can take the words of my text upon our lips, and say, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave ; for He shall receive me." He is but the first-fruits of the Resurrection. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We shall be like Him, not only in His Resurrection, but in His life of Glory, and in His Ascension into Heaven. "Where I am, there shall ye be also," is His promise. God will not only redeem our souls from the power of the grave, restore them to life, and re-unite both body and soul in an endless continuance, but He will receive us. He will claim us for His own, and make us and keep us His for ever. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare

a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

The simple question will be of each of us, How far have we loved Christ, and loved one another for Christ's sake in this world? It matters little how we are in this world, if we are but making the best use we can for God of all we are or have. S. Peter may be fast shut into the inner prison, and be guarded by four quaternions of soldiers, but outside those prison walls are the prayers of others going up continually before God on his behalf; within himself is the sure trust that God will do all that is right and best with him. And so his prison is but a mere temporary place of detention, which the Angel entered, and all its bars and bolts are drawn back in a moment, and the heavy chains fell off from the imprisoned hands. "Our soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are delivered."

So this world is our prison-house for a time; but it will not be for long. The longest life soon passes away. "The days of man are but as grass. In the Morning it is green, and groweth up: but in the Evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered." Only let us labour, not "to call lands after our own names," but to "lay up treasure in heaven." See that we live our life here below, not for ourselves only, but for God; helping one another when and as we can; praying for one another; keeping steadfastly to the strait and narrow way of life. Let us

leave all without care in God's hands, assured that He will do for each of us what is best; and that at last "He will redeem our soul from the power of the grave: and will receive us" into His heavenly kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXIX.

Advent.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence."—PSALM l. 3.

THIS psalm is one ascribed to Asaph, and not to David. There are eleven other psalms with the same title; viz., the 73rd up to the 83rd, inclusive. The last psalm speaks of universal *redemption*, this psalm of universal *judgment*.

As God came down on mount Sinai to give the law contained in the two tables of ten commandments to Israel, so here He is described as coming down to take account with all the world for their breach of those commandments, the first fifteen verses referring to the first four commandments, the latter verses referring to the second table of the law, directly naming, we may say, the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments.

Both these divisions, we should notice, end with much the same declaration from God. First, "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most Highest. And call upon Me in the time of trouble: so will I hear

thee, and thou shalt praise Me." Secondly, "Whoso offereth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the Salvation of God." Here then we find the great Gospel truth set out, that it is with the heart, and not in formal and external acts, that God's truest worship consists. What to Him are sacrifices of bulls and of goats, if there be not the sacrifice of praise and prayer, and of a holy life? What is faith without works? What are leaves if the tree bear no fruit? What are pious words without inward holiness? What is the whited sepulchre, however beautiful externally, if within it be full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness? This is one great truth set before us in this psalm. It is the frequent cry of the prophets to Israel of old: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts."* "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?"†

These are not what God looks for at the hands of His people, but for the obedience of a holy life, and for the sacrifice of praise to Him with heart and voice, especially in and by the one great Eucharistic service which He Himself has instituted, given to us, and commanded us to "do this"—the only liturgical service ordained by Christ Himself. And let us remember

* Isa. i. 11.

† Micah vi. 7.

this also, it is the *only* subject of which, so far as we know, He has *Himself* spoken to us from heaven since His ascension to glory.

But here in my text is, I think, a direct reference to our great Advent subject, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence;" and again, "God is judge Himself." "Our God shall come." When these words were written, men knew not how or when they would ever become true. *We* know, however, that they have once already been fulfilled, and we look for their fulfilment again, when "God shall be judge Himself." "Our God shall come." Yes, brethren, Christmas-day, now close at hand, will remind us once more of the truth of this prophecy. The Son of God, of one substance with the Father, became Immanuel, or God with us. Two natures, both perfect in one person. He was born on Christmas night at Bethlehem. He came to redeem us. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ. Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou *shalt come* to be our *Judge*." Thus it is that day by day, through one year after another, we celebrate, in the noblest Christian hymn of all, this great double truth, "Our God shall come." "God is

Judge Himself." True, when He came at first, though born in silence, He did not keep silence. When He had only infant lips, and was speechless, then the choir of Angels took up the glorious Hymn of "Glory to God in the highest," and were heard on earth. And though after that He grew up in silence to man's estate, like some grand old tree attains its magnitude unseen and hidden in the recesses of a forest, still His silent life had voices which spake to those who witnessed it; and when His hour was truly come for Him to show Himself to be the Messiah come at last, then He no longer kept silence with His lips, but "spake as never man spake." "The common people heard Him gladly." "For He spake as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." "Come, see a man, that told me all things that ever I did." And so S. John ends his history of that wonderful and busy life in these words: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." The history which we have in the four Gospels of our Blessed Lord's life and words, is, we should always remember, but the merest outline of all He said and did; indeed the greater part of the Gospel of S. John is but the history of the last few days of His life before the Crucifixion. So true of Him is the word, "Our God did come, and did not keep silence."

Still, this is past and gone; and the minds of all

men dwell much more naturally upon the future than the past. Even a year's events to each of us soon fade from our memory and thoughts; but in one way or other the *future* is ever presenting itself before the mind. Every day we live we are employed in some way with regard to what is to come. Now the greatest and best of all future things for us to remember and think of as often as we can, is the next fulfilment of these words of my text: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence;" "For God is Judge Himself." If we look at our Bible attentively, we shall see that it is not *death*, but our Lord's coming, and the Resurrection, and the Last Judgment, which are continually referred to, and kept before our minds. It matters little how or where we die, so that we have but lived well, and in the thought of the great Judgment to come. Look for a moment at that parable of Dives and Lazarus. In it is recorded the death of one, and then of the other; yet how little is said of either. The one "died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom;" the other "died, and was buried;" but that is all. The whole parable is taken up with the short story of the *previous* life of both, and then with the state of both *after* death.

Let us bear this in mind: "Our God will come, and will not keep silence." The heavens will pass away with a great noise; there will be the trumpet of the Archangel, calling back into life every one that

has lived, and passed away. It will be the work of a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye." "As the lightning lighteneth out of the one part under Heaven, and shineth even unto the other part; so shall the coming of the Son of man be." So too in that summary of our faith which we call the Apostles' Creed, we say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, who shall come again to judge the quick and the dead." Also, "I believe in the Resurrection of the dead;" but of our own death no mention is made. We need to think but little of that, if we but live well, and try to please God, remembering the account we must one day give before the judgment-seat of Christ. We know that it is true, "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints;" yet for all that, "Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost," passed away beneath a shower of stones. So too S. James was beheaded; but not a word is told us of his last sayings and acts. This thought may be of great consolation to all those who in this life pass more or less time in suffering before their end come. It is no sign of God's anger, but often of His love and goodness to those who are so exercised. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." All will be right if we love God; and they are His own words—"If ye love Me, keep my commandments."

"Our God shall come;" but in some things, like the first coming, so will that second be. There had been

little to remind the world of that first promise of all for a long while. Four hundred years had passed away since the last of the prophets fell asleep; and the world went on as usual. One day, as now, told but of another. The sun rose and set; and the seasons came and went in their usual order—summer and winter, cold and heat, seed-time and harvest, day and night, in their perpetual round, continued as they were from the Beginning of the Creation. But in a moment Christ was here—born in a stable, and unobserved, till man's ears caught the sounds of Heaven, and the Angels' song.

Such was that first coming. So in its own unexpected way and time will be the next. Probably, from various intimations which are given us, it will be in the night—when most are sleeping; some, it may be, on their knees; some in pleasure and dissipation—without a word of special notice, or herald sign of any kind. “At Midnight will there be a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” “He will not keep silence,” as my text says; for has He not told us: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of damnation.” These words exactly bear out the declaration of my text: “God is judge Himself;” for Christ says, “As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to

the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, ~~because~~ **He is the Son of man.**"

My brethren, it is to this, this great event, which silently but surely draweth nigh, that we need turn our thoughts, and try to fix our hearts upon it. Not a day goes by but makes it one day nearer; not one hour strikes upon our ear, but it may well remind us that our time of preparation is so much lessened. Leave to themselves all anxious thoughts as to *how* or *when* you may die, so that you but live unto God; He, be assured, will order as is best as to *that*, both for you and me. How many pass away every year at sea or in mines, and meet with an unrecorded grave in the memory of man; but it is not so with God. We are specially told that "the sea will give back its dead," just as God marks and knows every turf which lies above those already gone before us. Try to live well; try to live unto God; try to do good; and then, come pain and sorrow, or bright days and peaceful hours, even to our last, in God's hands we are safe. We can commit our souls into His hands, as unto a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour, and desire in all things to say, "Thy will be done."

SERMON XXX.

Christmas-day.

"Out of Zion hath God appeared, in perfect beauty."—PSALM l. 2.

THE more we consider this psalm of Asaph, the more shall we discover, I am sure, what a wonderful prophecy it contains—what great truths are very clearly foretold in verses which we all perhaps repeat (I am sure I have often done so myself) without entering at all into their full meaning and inspiration. These first six verses present to us a well-defined outline of our great Advent subject; viz., the first and last Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I have already drawn your attention to the words, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence;" "For God is Judge Himself." And here in my text is the great fact of Christmas-day told in plain terms a thousand years before it came to pass. It is here spoken of as if it had already happened. "Out of Zion hath God appeared, in perfect beauty." And then, what immediately follows this Manifestation of God? "The Lord,

even the most mighty God, hath spoken, and called the world from the rising up of the Sun unto the going down thereof." In other words, from the east even to the west are all men "called of God;" just as the Lord's last words on earth were, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Thus are the two Comings of Christ brought together—the first, in which God speaks; for it is God the Son—the Word—Who comes, and calls all men unto Him; the second, in which God is the Judge, when He will "call to the Heavens above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather my saints together unto Me." We have just had four weeks given us that our thoughts may be more especially turned to these two great Advents—the first in humility, the next in glory; the first to redeem, the second to judge the world; the first as *God become man*, the next as *man*, but truly God; "for God hath appointed a day in which He will judge all men by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.* "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."†

To-day, however, we celebrate with great joy the fulfilment of this old promise—"Out of Zion hath God appeared, in perfect beauty." Here we have the *place*

* Acts vii. 31.

† John v. 22.

and the *fact*, the *person* and the *truth* of the Incarnation set before us. First, the place is Zion. Just as London is often put for the whole of England, or England for Englishmen, so here "Zion" stands for the Holy Land, in which, at Bethlehem, hard by Jerusalem, the Saviour of mankind was born, in a stable. He, "the Day-spring from on high, hath visited us."

And who was He by right, and in Himself? My text rightly says, "Out of Zion—God." It is no less, and no other. No created being though He were Angel or Archangel, or higher, but the Eternal Word, the Creator, "by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not any thing made that was made." So S. Paul breaks forth: "Thou madest Him a little" (or for a little while) "lower than the Angels; Thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet." * To-day came amongst us the King of kings, an infant nursed, as our infants are, in His mother's arms; and when laid to rest, it was amid no softness and honour, but in the hard manger of a rude stable. He who was Lord of all, came as the servant of all; and having all things, He for our sakes "became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich." His Coming thus was recognized only by a few, a very few. The Inn at Bethlehem was full of strangers from a distance, come, like the holy family, to be enrolled

* Heb. ii. 7.

in David's city of David's line; and they alone, it seems, had to take refuge in the stable on this winter night.

Hard by, a few humble shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, saw a great sight in the Heavens above, and heard a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God at what had happened, and was now begun for man's Restoration, and guided by the Angel's words, they came to Bethlehem to see the wonderful Child Whose birth was thus announced to them from Heaven. Twelve days later other visitors arrived from a far-distant part of the East, bringing with them costly offerings of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh; but nothing is said of all the world in and around Bethlehem, and of Jerusalem, the great city only ten miles off. One would have expected that all Jerusalem would have gone out to see and learn what they could of the child, and from the shepherds; but no! Thirty and three years afterwards a great multitude did surround Him, going before, and following after, and spreading their garments in His way as He drew nigh the city. Then His miracles, especially the raising of Lazarus, had excited a great many to treat Him as a king. "Lo, thy King cometh unto thee, sitting on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." But none now paid court to the stable-born Infant of Bethlehem. True, in forty days' time the holy family enter the Temple for the mother's "churching" (as we call it), for her thanks-

giving and thank-offering after childbirth; and then holy Simeon, who had been promised life till his eyes had looked on the Saviour of the world, took the child into his arms, and thanked God, and desired to depart. It is enough; "Lord, now let thy servant die." "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel."

Thus "out of Zion" (as the place) "hath God" (as the Person) "appeared" to-day, and from to-day; and it was "in perfect beauty." The prophet tells us that there should be "no beauty that we should desire Him." True, the perfection of beauty in God's sight is not in a man's outward form, as Samuel was told in regarding Saul; for the Lord looketh not at the face, but at the heart of each of us. But our Lord was *thus* the Perfection of manhood; He had no will in Him but God's will, no self-seeking ends, but only this, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Greatest of all, by His humility, stooping to earth that He might raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. "For Thou only art holy: Thou only art the Lord: Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." His enemies tried, but in vain, to find some flaw of life or character in Him. Liers in wait approached with subtle questions, "tempt-

ing Him," and trying to draw Him on into some false position. There was the Tribute money, brought up with the apparently harmless question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" There was the woman taken in her sin and led up to Him, to gain, if possible, a *judicial* sentence of condemnation from His lips. There was the woman in Simon's house washing His feet with her tears, not rejected, though others at the table were thinking in their hearts, "If this man were a prophet, He would have known who or what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner." But the perfection of purity and gentleness replied, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Thus it was that our Lord Jesus Christ "appeared in perfect beauty"—the perfect beauty of the Godhead abiding in the Humanity, born of His mother Mary, on this high festal day. He came more beautiful than the first bright rays of the summer's Sun as it pierces the mists, which have gathered on the hills and valleys through the night. For "in the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law." "Great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Or, as another apostle states the great truth of to-day, "The Word was made Flesh, and tabernacled amongst us, (and we beheld His glory, the

glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Brethren, we are permitted once more on earth to "keep these things in remembrance." To many among us, a birthday is always a day of joy and thanksgiving; but this is the great Birthday for all of us to keep; because it is the Birth of Him Who came "to seek and to save us who were lost;" "to make us the sons of God;" and our bodies to be (as His was) "temples of the Holy Ghost." We can never think too highly of the greatness and blessedness to us of to-day's event. He loved us above the love of father or mother, brother or sister, husband, or wife, or child. He gave His life for ours; and not only gave it, but was *born* that He *might* surrender it for our sakes.

Let us make Christmas a happy time to all, so far as we can. It is the commemoration-day of our Restoration to happiness—for there is no happiness where sin reigns in any heart—it is the Beginning of a happiness which has no end to all them that love God. Love makes happiness; for where love is there no "ill" can come. And thus in the list of those graces, which are the fruits of the Spirit's work in our hearts, the apostle places "joy" next after love, and before peace: therefore, if we by love can make others happy at this season, let us esteem it as one of the best modes of keeping Christmas time. Here is the origin of many of those old customs still prevalent amongst us, and

associated with to-day. All mankind are brought together through the Birth of Christ. In Him we are one body, in which, "if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it; if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." So "bearing one another's burdens;" lightening where we can the sorrows which surround us—feeling for others as though what they experience were our own experience—we shall best keep Christmas-day; and what is better than that, we shall best become like unto Him who on this day "out of Zion appeared in perfect beauty."

SERMON XXXI.

First Office of Repentance.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me."

PSALM li. 1-3.

THIS 51st Psalm has been called the psalm of all psalms, that of all inspired compositions which has been repeated more often than any, except the Lord's Prayer. Prior to the Reformation, it concluded every one of the daily services, except on Christmas-day, and from Easter to the Ascension. Thus it is said, for many hundreds of years it was repeated seven times daily. There are said to exist some two hundred commentaries on this psalm alone. It has also been observed that there is scarcely one great theological truth which this wonderful psalm does not set forth. We find in it the Incarnation; the call of the Gentiles; sin both original and actual; grace both to justify and to sanctify; the atonement; and the Mission of the Holy Ghost. It is the first of a series of fifteen psalms in the second book which are specially ascribed to David, with fuller headings than to most. It consists of three principal

divisions. First (*vv.* 1–8), a prayer for forgiveness; second (*vv.* 9–12), a prayer for renewal; third (*vv.* 13–19), the good determinations of one who feels himself to be forgiven, and restored once more to God's favour.

There is too one special point in these fifteen psalms which our translation neither here nor elsewhere keeps to. As I have explained to you before, there are two principal names in the Bible by which God is called, "Elohim," or the God of nature and of all the world; and "Jehovah," or the God especially of His chosen people Israel—"the covenant name," as it is sometimes called. It would have been well if the former was always translated "God," and the latter "Lord." Thus in the 19th Psalm it is rightly said, first; "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Elohim); but at the seventh and after verses: "The law of the Lord (Jehovah) is perfect, converting the soul. The statutes of the Lord (Jehovah) are right, and rejoice the heart." So in these fifteen psalms the name Elohim is principally used as though David felt, after his great sin and fall, that he might not so freely call upon God as "Jehovah," his own God, as he had done before. It is the same with the books of Solomon. While Solomon was living in God's favour, and wrote the book of Proverbs, we find the name "Elohim" occurring only five times; but the name "Jehovah" occurs some ninety times. But when we come to that sad book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon in his old age, when he had grievously

fallen away from God, in that the name "Jehovah" disappears *altogether*; but the name "Elohim" occurs thirty-nine times. So in these fifteen psalms, the fact of God being called "Elohim" instead of "Jehovah" betrays a sense of sin and falling away—a relationship to God more like that of other nations than of Israel.

But this psalm is, I hope and think, well known to almost every one of us. There is scarcely one psalm in the whole book more worthy of being learnt by heart by us all, that we may be able to repeat it to ourselves or to others at any suitable moment, with or without our Bible or Prayer Book in our hands. It stands the middle one of the seven penitential psalms to which I have already drawn your attention; and so from its subject, and from its occurrence in the Communion service used on Ash-Wednesday, it is a special psalm for all during this present season of Lent. To understand the occasion of it, and its use by David, we must look at 2 Samuel xi. and xii. It is directly connected with the history there given us of David's great sin and true repentance. The heading to this psalm in our Bibles gives this special reference. We there read how David had broken, we may say in one crime, all the commandments after the fifth; especially the seventh and eighth. And yet it would appear that for several months he had remained altogether dead and blind to his real state *before* God, altogether unconscious of his guilt in God's sight. Can there be a worse sign in any

man than this state? any farther removed from a state of repentance, and so of forgiveness? It looks very like being given over to a reprobate mind, from which there is seldom, if ever, any true and full recovery, when a man has fallen into some very great sin, or continues in some course of vice and lust, but is not in the least alive to his sin and state. On the Cross, the one thief seized the first and only moment he had, and by a wonderful avowment of faith and consciousness of guilt—but of Christ's divine power and goodness—obtained the promise, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." But the other on the left hand of the great Victim taunted his fellow-sufferer with the words, "If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." While the other replied, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Here is the exact instance of one who felt up to his last hour as David now had done for months past, but also of one who felt as David did when he wrote this psalm which we are considering to-day.

My brethren, it is the special work and office of God's Holy Spirit to make the sinner ill at ease and unhappy in and about himself. It is really a good and hopeful sign when sin robs a man of his peace of mind.

makes him, in some measure at least, sensible of it, and to lament over it. Even though at the moment he be still under the dominion of his sin, still this is a hopeful sign in any of us. It shows us at least that such a man is not yet given over to Satan ; that the blessed Spirit of purity and truth is still present within or about him ; that as yet he is not finally cast away. All then depends upon what course such an one adopts without delay. If he goes on as hitherto—if he yields to his temptation, be it what it may, and does not strive against it, and does not pray to God to give him power to get free from the dominion of this sin—then the fear is that he will go on in it until the end.

Even Judas, we may believe, *might* have recovered, *might* have been saved. It was to this end, we are sure, that our Lord gave him again and again such plain intimations of his state ; but he walked on, like a blind man on the edge of a precipice, till the final catastrophe overtook him, and he fell away, never to be brought back and saved. This makes it so dangerous for any of us to resist a good impulse, a good thought, a good desire or intention, when it rises up within us. It is the work in us of God's Holy Spirit. It is He who points the finger to the way in which we should go : how blessed if we follow it ! It is He that sends the favourable breath of wind which may fill our sails, and waft our ship into the haven where we would be. But if this be all resisted, as sin strengthens in us, grace diminishes. Resistance

to God's striving in us drives Him away from us ; and resistance to the devil drives him also away from us. When our Lord withstood Satan to the face in His threefold temptation of the sorest kind, "Satan departed from Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." So, on the other hand, S. Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, said to the Jews, whom he was addressing, "Ye do always *resist* the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye." And so the apostle S. James tells us very plainly, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you."

Brethren, how little do many of us think how much our salvation is in our own choice, in our own power. We are like the man with the withered arm, to whom Christ bade, "Stretch forth thine arm." What power had He to do this ? It hung lifeless by his side, like a dead and broken branch bending to the ground on some grand old tree. Yet He, Who bade, gave the power to do as He bade. Had the man refused to try and lift his arm he might never have been healed ; but he did as he was bade. "He stretched it out, and it was restored whole as the other." Let us ever remember this instance. There must be no delay, no putting off, no looking for a more convenient season than the present. The tide of salvation waits for no man, any more than the tide will wait for the vessel to enter the harbour, or cross the bar at the river's mouth. Nathan has

hardly said the last word of "Thou art the man," before David has said, "I have sinned;" and breaks forth, we believe, from day to day, or hour to hour, in the words of this great penitential psalm—the 51st. So too S. Peter. He had been forewarned of his threefold denial of his Lord. The cock crew once, but it fell on a deaf ear and darkened soul; but the same sound fell upon his ear once more, and his eye caught one look from the Saviour in His bonds at the further end of that large room, "and he went out and wept bitterly." Nay, it is said he never heard a cock crow again without shedding bitter tears of remorse for his fall, but of joy for his restoration and forgiveness.

Brethren, we may be as freely forgiven any sin, if we do but as freely and fully repent. Let us try to feel and think as David does in the words of this most beautiful psalm. And let us meditate upon that descriptive parable of the soul returning to God in S. Luke xv.—the prodigal son in the strange land feeding upon the husks which the swine did eat, while his father's household all had bread enough and to spare. The thought brought him to himself. "He came to himself," as the expressive wording is; he had been blind, but now saw; he had been out of himself, but now returned home to himself again; he turned back, and was welcomed once and for ever; and in this work let us try to help *one another*. Next to the blessedness of never falling ourselves must be to help another to recover. It *undoes* the devil's work.

"It shall cover a multitude of sins." But to tempt another is to *do* the devil's own work in his stead. So says the apostle. "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

SERMON XXXII.

Second Office of Repentance.

"Make me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again; and stablish me with Thy free Spirit."—PSALM li. 10-12.

I HAVE already pointed out the occasion out of which this most beautiful psalm arose. Its history is written, as I said, in 2 Sam. xi. xii. For months David had remained blind and dead to his grievous sin. He had offended against four at least out of the Ten Commandments; and yet till Nathan the Prophet was sent to him by God, he seems to have been perfectly in the dark as to his real state in God's sight. This is always one direct result of any great sin wilfully committed: the spiritual eye of the soul is darkened and closed by wilful determination in sin, just as we can, if we please, shut out the brightest shining of the sun in summer by closing our shutters, or entering into a cave or cellar.

And we must also remember, that though some influence of the Holy Ghost was undoubtedly bestowed upon David and all the holy men of old, "who spake," we are told, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"

yet they had not, we know, that supreme gift of the Spirit in them, that abiding Presence of the very Person of the Holy Ghost, as we have. That Gift is the one specially great gift to man obtained by Christ our Lord's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven. It is not an external influence merely now. It is not like the passing over us of the air and wind we breathe and hear moving around us; but it is in all Christ's people an abiding *Presence* in power of the Holy Spirit. Thus S. Paul says: "Your bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost which is in you." "Know ye not that the Spirit of God is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And therefore, as David had not this gift, which we enjoy as our very birthright through Christ from our Baptism, we must not be surprised if David's conscience was not so alive to sin, however deadly and great it was, as we might have expected that it would be after his long faithfulness to God. We ought far more to wonder at ourselves than at David, that we and multitudes around us should fall into grievous sins, and never truly repent, and so never really recover themselves, when we enjoy such great things beyond David, and know that we are endowed with a power of resistance to sin, and a power to subdue Satan and drive him from us, as our Lord Himself did when He was assailed, if we will but rely upon it, and use it.

But taking these words of my text to-day after those

first verses we last considered, they show us how fully this 51st Psalm enters into the truth and fulness of a *perfect repentance*. Those first words of it look only on the *past*; these of to-day look to the *future*. Those first words speak of what David had *done*; these, of what he desired to *do* and to *be* for the *time to come*. At first he prays for pardon, mercy, and forgiveness; here he prays for new strength, new light, new power against his besetting sins and the return of temptation. And these together make up what repentance really means; for, as I have often said to you, repentance is not merely a sorrow for past sin; it is not merely a grieving over what we have done amiss; it is not merely seeking at God's hands forgiveness of what we have done against Him in thought, in word, or in deed, as so many speak and think. Our repentance is very incomplete, if that be all. It is all, I know, that many persons take the word "repentance" to mean; but if they allow themselves to go on so, they are miserably deceiving themselves. Many a man so far repents simply because his sin has brought him into trouble, or ruined his health, or has lost him his position and calling in the world, or deprived him of the love and respect of his friends and neighbours; but after all, my brethren, that at best is only what S. Paul calls a "sorrow of the world," a "repentance which needs to be repented of." True repentance looks as much to the *future* as to the *past*. It is not merely

what we have done amiss for which we desire forgiveness, but it is seeking new power, new grace, new light to *know* God's Will, and new strength to *fulfil* it, which alone renders repentance truly acceptable to God. Only think how this cuts at the root of what we call a "death-bed repentance." If a man puts off all sorrow for and all resistance to his sins till he lies on his dying-bed, and he knows and expects that he has but a few days or hours, or at most weeks and months, to live, and that only in a weak and worn-out state, unable to work and do his duty in the world, his repentance is necessarily comprised in looking back with sorrow and regret on the past. He may hope for God's mercy in some measure to be shown him for Christ's sake; but as for *doing anything* for God in this world, as to giving any proof of the sincerity of his repentance by leading a new life, as to undoing in thought, in word, and in deed all that he may have offended God and injured others by doing, that is now impossible.

No one would limit the effect of a late expression of repentance for sin in any one, even at his last moments; but at best we can but hope for such, that he may be accepted, as the dying thief was upon his cross at our Saviour's side, and may fill a place in one of the lowest rooms in that "House which is eternal in the Heavens;" for "in My Father's House" (says Christ) "are *many mansions*."

Here then is the great use of this season of Lent. No one can say that he knew not that it was a necessary part of repentance that he should "bring forth fruits meet for repentance" while he is in life and health and strength. Year by year, as this season returns, it tells every man, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear, that we must all have in us a "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Of course, if a man altogether refuse to come to Church, or when he is here shuts his ears, and his eyes, and his heart, lest he should be moved to repentance—seeing, but not perceiving; hearing, but not understanding—it is no wonder if the first serious thought which disturbs his soul should be, as it often happens, when he knows that he is in a dying state, and has now but a little time to live, that we must each strive and pray that it may not be our case. For this end, what we need is more working in us of the blessed Spirit of God. Whatever good we do, whatever holy thoughts or good desires may rise up in our minds, if ever we are led to pray more earnestly than hitherto, to be more watchful against sin, and more anxious to please God, all this is the working in us of the Holy Ghost. Our strength is from Him; our power over sin is His Presence within us; our love of holiness and hatred of sin come only from His working within us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And therefore, brethren, when we fall down on our knees and pray for God's pardon of all our sins and

negligences and transgressions for Jesus Christ's sake, let us ever ask Him at the same time for some more special gift and working in us of His All-holy Spirit. Let us do exactly what is pointed out to us in this psalm. First let us say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness: according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse we from my sin. For I acknowledge my faults; and my sin is ever before me." And then let us go on and use such words as these of my text: "Make me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again; and stablish me with Thy free Spirit." Let us look thus, both *back* to what is past and done, and *forward* to the time and work which may yet be granted to us.

This is to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling. The very consciousness of all we find that we have done amiss in thought or word or deed, will bring us closer to the Saviour's Cross. We shall be in heart and thought like those few faithful women who stood around the Cross, at the very moment of the great Sacrifice. Our voices and our hearts will go up together before God, saying, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us." We shall pray for God's Holy Spirit to live

and work in us, and bring forth in us all those fruits of faith which are to the praise and glory of God. And the hatred of sin and the love of God will grow in us more and more. We shall become more and more like unto God in all our habits of thought and life. We may not be in the least degree aware of it ourselves, but to the eyes of Angels, and perhaps of men on earth, there will be a perceptible change going on in us. We shall ripen for God's Harvest, as the seed grows imperceptibly into the blade, and the blade into the ear, and the ear becomes ripe and hard, and easy for the sickle. But none of this, remember, in any of us, will come of itself. We must ourselves, by an act of our own will, strive to enter in at the strait gate; for if we *strive* not, we shall be of them of whom our Lord says, "Many shall seek to enter in" (that is, without striving*), "and shall not be able." Try then, dear brethren, all of us, thus to perfect a repentance in ourselves more and more each Lent. Let us search out our sins, and keep them ever before us; but let us look on to the *future* of our life in this world as well as back to the *past*. Let us not only ask for mercy through Christ our Lord, but for God's Holy Spirit more and more to work in us, to strengthen, comfort, enlighten, and direct us, that our path may be like the bright light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,—the day of God,—the day of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

* That is *agonising*, as a wrestler.

We have each a great work to do—a steep hill to climb—a long voyage by sea and land, as it were, before we can reach the land which is very far off. Still let us not fear or hesitate or delay. There are voices which call to us from above. There is One who ever says to us, “Fear not; I will be with thee;” “All things are possible to him that believeth;” “The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in henceforth and for evermore.” Amen.

August, 1875.

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